

**DEMOCRACY
THROUGH INTIMIDATION
AND TERROR**

DEMOCRACY THROUGH INTIMIDATION AND TERROR

The Untold Story of Kashmir Politics

Prem Nath Bazaz



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Democracy through Intimidation and Terror

by Prem Nath Bazaz

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*to those brave men and women of Kashmir who, defying
intimidation, terror and lawlessness, heroically
fought in the hectic days of 1977 elections,
for civil liberties and democratic rights
only to be crushed in the end by
unrestrained hooligan hordes*

Preface

THE countries in the continents of Asia and Africa which achieved liberation from foreign rule during the past three decades have not, as was facilely expected, emerged as democratic nations with people enjoying civil liberties and human rights. Everywhere in these lands, euphemistically called the Third World, millions emancipated from alien domination are engaged in struggles to establish democratic principles and norms because they have been deprived of the benefits of independence. The only change effected by the disappearance of imperialism has been the replacement of old masters by native despots among the politicians who are more ruthless, vain and cruel than those who were forced to leave by spontaneous mass uprisings against them.

In the Third World, Indian Republic has a unique standing and is recognized as one of the few countries which has been successful in promoting democratic principles and strengthening democratic institutions initially established by the British imperialists.

Though for nineteen months (June 1975—January 1977) India came under the dark shadow of authoritarianism and was on the verge of being engulfed by dictatorship, it was miraculously rescued by the marvellous spirit of freedom displayed by enraged electorate at the hustings in the battle of the ballot in March 1977. Democracy was resurrected and set on its feet again.

Nevertheless, the picture of Indian democracy is not as bright as it would seem and as the freedom-lovers have been applauding inside and outside the country; the lurking danger of re-appearance of despotism has not been destroyed once and for all, and certainly not in every state of the Indian Union.

The territories of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh, a constituent state of Indian Union known to the world as Kashmir, is the most enchanting piece of land in the subcontinent whose scenic beauties have been sung through the ages by gifted poets and talented writers no less than by enthralled visitors. Yet, since independence, the six million people of this state are passing through a nightmare the end of which is nowhere in sight. While in the rest of the country, people have enjoyed human and democratic rights guaranteed under the Constitution, the people in Kashmir have been continuously deprived of them throughout the post-independence era.

When, therefore, early this year the Congress Party, as a punishment for its misdeeds under Emergency was ousted from power by Janta Party, the people of Kashmir hoped that embued with new zeal and dynamism born of the struggle against Congress totalitarianism, the Janata Party might become a saviour of the Kashmiris too. But, unfortunately, despite their heroic struggle they were ravished and handed over to the fascist ruffians by the Janata rulers for reasons best known to them.

By conviction a scientific humanist, I have been for over three decades a critic of Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of life as well as his theories on politics and economics. I hold that so long as the two major political parties—the Congress and the Janata—adhere to Gandhian ideology, as they profess to do, India will continue to remain far away from modernism and its poverty-stricken millions will be deprived of fulfilment of their needs and aspirations. Besides, I consider party politics as harmful for individual and national growth.

Not surprisingly, therefore, many of my friends were puzzled when I consented to be a member of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Janata Party in Kashmir. They will find an explanation in the pages of this book.

However, that is not the main reason which urged me to

prepare this comprehensive report on the political developments in the Kashmir State, a territory which continues to be disputed between India and Pakistan. More weighty reasons have prompted me to write it.

In its first meeting the Ad Hoc Committee nominated me as the spokesman of the State Janata Party. I feel I must justify the trust reposed in me by giving an objective account of what happened in Kashmir and what I saw and experienced.

I am of the opinion that the elections of 1977 were in line with five others previously held when National Conference or Congress Party ruled the state and which have been admitted by all fair-minded observers and the national press to have been disgracefully manipulated.

Although the central leadership of Janata Party expediently and Kashmir Ad Hoc Committee unwillingly conceded the victory of the National Conference at the polls, I refused to follow suit because I could not shut my eyes to glaring facts which, I have no doubt, conclusively prove that Kashmiris were raped. In these pages, I have made an attempt to tell the grim story of the struggle which the downtrodden Kashmiris fought with great hopes in May and June last year only to be crushed in the end by hooligan hordes. My aim in telling it, supported by available documents and coupled with my personal knowledge, is to let the world public know of the facts and judge for themselves what sort of government has been imposed on the Kashmiris and in what manner and by what means.

The State of Jammu and Kashmir is a multi-lingual and multi-religious territory. Broadly speaking, it is divided into three regions, namely, Jammu in the south, Kashmir Valley in the centre and Ladakh in the north which are respectively populated mostly by the Hindus, the Muslims and the Buddhists.

The dispute between India and Pakistan as presented and debated upon in world forums including the Security Council, has been over the accession of the entire State, but, in the last analysis, it is the Valley and areas adjacent to it inhabited predominantly by the Muslims which is the bone of contention. For that reason, attention in the present book has been paid mainly to the happenings, events and developments in this part

of the State though other parts are neither underestimated nor ignored.

Kashmir can be integrated with the Indian Union when the State people sincerely desire it and when a government freely chosen by them comes into existence and votes for it. An enlightened public opinion can prove helpful in achieving that devoutly wished aim. I am hopeful that this report will prove instrumental in dispelling to some extent the darkness spread by propaganda which is neither without motive nor friendly to the Kashmiris.

I have no doubt that there are a number of nations in the Third World which are undergoing similar hardships and sufferings as are borne by the Kashmiris. The persecuted people deeply engaged in life and death struggle against unscrupulous upstarts and unprincipled power-hungry politicians need attention, sympathy and support from the fortunate brethren living happily and peacefully under full fledged democracies. This tiny volume, I hope, might prove instrumental in stirring the progressive elements to come to the rescue of the persecuted.

I have to acknowledge with gratitude the assistance rendered by Maulana Mohammad Sayed Masoodi in the preparation of this book. He kindly read the manuscript to check the facts. He has permitted me to publish the correspondence he has had with the Janata leaders and others. I may add in fairness to him that he does not share with me all the views expressed in this book.

I owe a debt of gratefulness to my wife whose affectionate care in nursing me during the months of electioneering and after enabled me to undertake the task despite my ill health which compelled me to visit the United States of America for treatment where I wrote these pages.

I feel beholden to Mr. K.P. Punnoose for critically going through the manuscript and for offering a few valuable suggestions which I found acceptable.

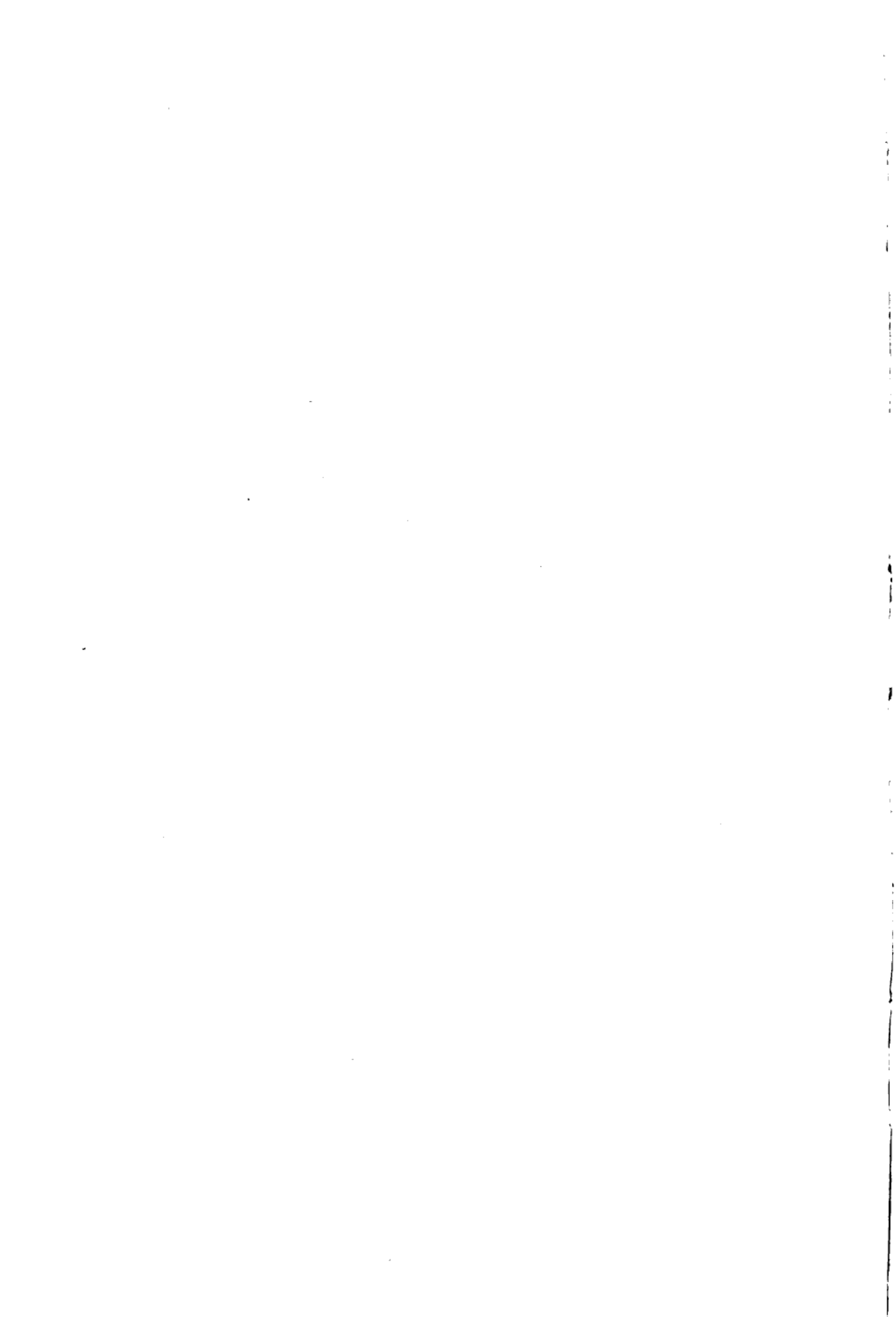
I am thankful to Mr. Devraj Sahney who took pains to collect relevant material for my use.

I am under obligation to my daughter, Madu Bazaz-Wangu who typed and retyped the manuscript.

And, lastly, I deeply appreciate the ungrudging help rendered by Mr. B.R. Chawla of Heritage Publishers for bringing out this volume within the shortest possible time.

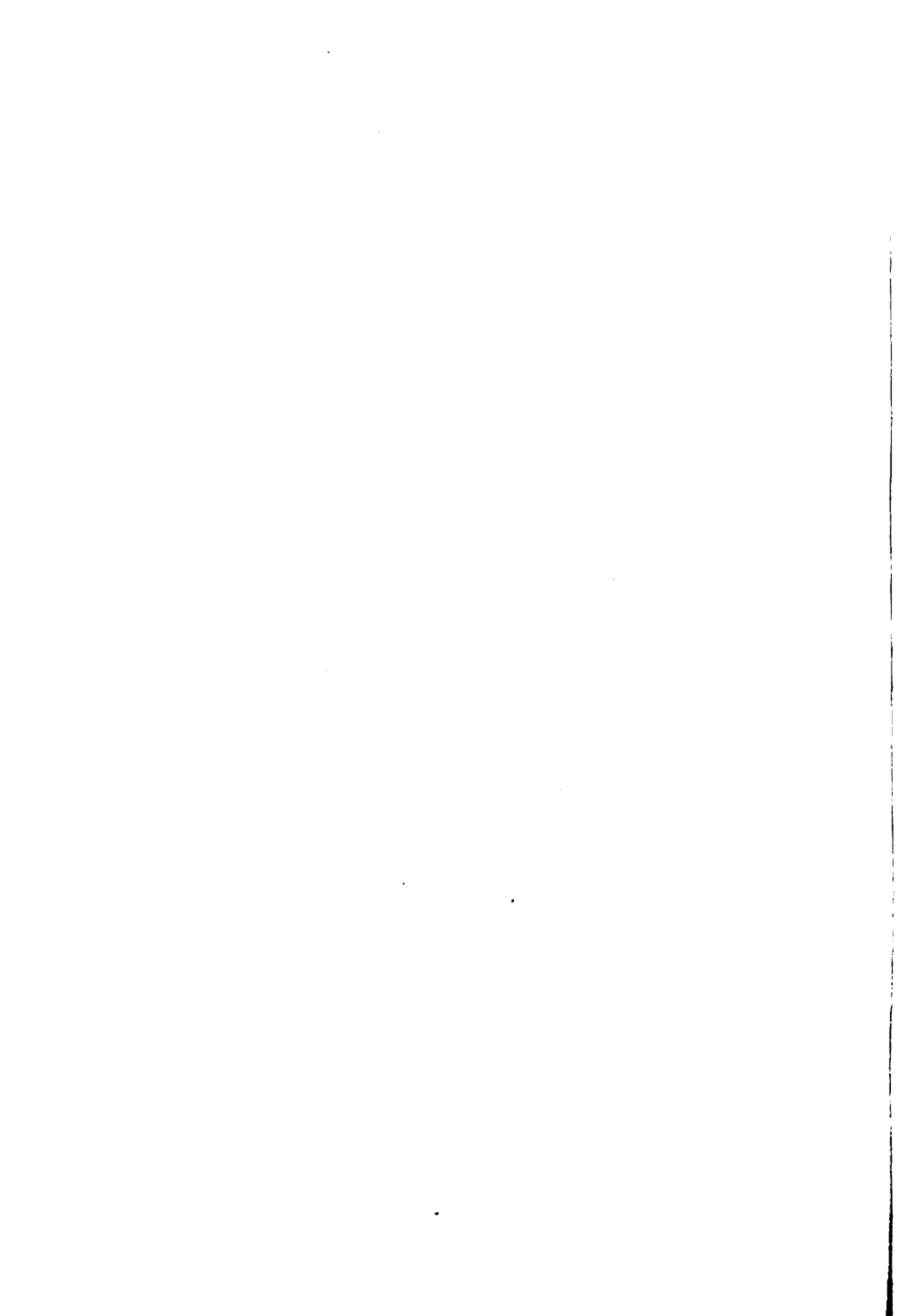
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Prem Nath Bazaz



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The Much Abused Article 370

NO other state in the Indian Union poses a problem beset with enormous difficulties as Kashmir. In 1947, at the time of independence, the Indian subcontinent was partitioned on the basis of religion professed by the people, to form two countries of Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan; only the State of Jammu and Kashmir predominantly Muslim in population, led by the Hindu ruler and supported by a leading political party, the National Conference, acceded to Hindu India in defiance of the basic principle governing the partition.

Constitutionally and legally, the accession of Kashmir to India was unexceptionable; there was no covenant to debar the State from doing so because the Act of British Parliament granting independence, allowed it. But law, written or unwritten, has little value if people affected by it believe that it has been imposed on them against their will. In the appalling conditions prevalent in 1947 in the subcontinent few impartial observers could believe that the majority of the Kashmir Muslims would voluntarily support the accession; the frenzy and fanaticism which preceded and followed the partition were factors hardly conducive to the alliance. It was through extraordinary courage and faith in the glorious future of Indian democracy that the Kashmiris threw in their lot with India.

Sixty million Muslims belonging to the majority Muslim

regions in the subcontinent had expressly voted for the partition and taken the fateful decision to live separately as a new nation; it, therefore, appeared vain to think that barely three million Kashmiris would like to willingly stay behind with India. The polarization of Hindu and Muslim politics as also the wild communal excitement accentuated by holocausts and bloodshed mocked at the venture.

When, therefore, Congress Government of India accepted the accession offer of Kashmir jointly made by Maharaja Hari Singh and the National Conference leadership, it was fully aware of the tremendous difficulties which it was sure to encounter in integrating the State with Indian Union; it realized that constitutional and legal accession would be meaningless if it was not followed by emotional integration of the Kashmiris in the mainstream of India's social and political life. Nine years after the accession was accepted as final and irrevocable, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, while replying to a debate on Kashmir in the Indian Parliament on August 7, 1956, had to remind the opposition: "The strongest bonds that bind will not be your armies or even your Constitution to which so much reference has been made, but bonds which are stronger than the Constitution and laws and armies—bonds that bind through love and affection and understanding". These words are as true today as when they were spoken in a heated debate twenty-two years ago.

It is true that the Kashmiris have an individuality of their own; in certain respects they differ from the rest of the Indians. Though on most of the political, economic and social matters facing newly-liberated people, the rest of Indians and Kashmiris are in agreement, there are a few issues, essentially cultural, emotional and sentimental which are viewed differently. At the time of partition extremism was rated high; moderation, balance and common sense were at a discount; a psychosis had been generated by horrible bloodshed and religious hysteria in both India and Pakistan. It was, however, hoped that with passage of time good sense would be restored, differences would gradually disappear, suspicions and fears allayed, making it possible for Kashmir to become an integral part of India as any other linguistic and administrative region of the vast country, and the Kashmiris would be happy, contented and prosperous.

Nevertheless, it is clear that the huge task of absorbing Muslim dominated Kashmir with India was no easy one; it demanded for its accomplishment, virtues of statesmanship, generosity, farsightedness, accommodation and, above all, selflessness on the part of both Indian publicmen and Kashmir leadership. As we shall see in the course of this study, both have been found wanting in these during the past three decades with the result that the problem of emotional integration of Kashmir with India remains unsolved to this day and stares fiercely in our face as it did in 1947. The recent elections to the State Legislature have aggravated it.

It is fair to recognize that soon after the acceptance of Instrument of Accession in 1947, Indian leaders made a good start; they were quite generous in handling the Kashmir State affairs. In the bulky, liberal Constitution which the Indian Constituent Assembly produced in a surprisingly short period of two years after achievement of independence, an article was inserted to assure the Kashmiris that they would be free to shape their own destiny as they desired and nothing would be imposed on them by Indian Parliament where Hindus would be in overwhelming majority and able to carry everything before them by sheer force of numbers.

The Article 370 of the Constitution which conferred a special status on Kashmir State was specifically meant to be a temporary provision as the Constitution-makers were fully confident that the close association of the people of Kashmir with free democratic India would convince them of their bright future by becoming an integral part of the Republic. According to this provision the Article 238, which is applicable to all other states, did not apply to Jammu and Kashmir. The Article 370 further limited the powers of the Indian Parliament to make laws about matters detailed in the Union List and the Concurrent List of the Constitution. Thus while remaining within the framework of Indian Constitution the Kashmir State virtually attained an autonomous status not enjoyed by any other state of the Republic of India. However, the Constitution-makers envisaged the day when the need of the temporary provision would end and the Article 370 abrogated. But this step was to be taken not at the behests of any extraneous authority, not even at the

demand of the Indian public opinion, however united or strong on the subject, but at the express wish of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. The concluding part of the Article 370 laid down that the President of India may by public notification, declare that this Article shall cease to be operative with such exception as specified but the recommendation of the Constituent Assembly of the Kashmir State to this effect shall be necessary before the President issues such a notification.

This was the outline of the blueprint drawn for the establishment of a democratic society in Kashmir in indissoluble partnership with India by the distinguished Constitution-makers. The Indian leaders had to prove not only by their words but also through their deeds that the Muslims could live like free, respectable and equal citizens of India as envisaged in the Constitution, convinced that their fears entertained at the time of partition were mostly unfounded. The leaders of Kashmir had to satisfy the people that through secularism alone they could achieve political and cultural freedom as well as economic progress within India than by forming part of Muslim Pakistan.

The grant of special status and complete internal autonomy under provisions of the Article 370 did not in practice prove an unmixed blessing for the people of Kashmir. National leaders started with certain assumptions and took certain things for granted. They believed that with British Imperialism religious acrimony will also vanish and there would be no more Hindu-Muslim clashes in India. Unfortunately, this happy development did not take place and, in fact, estrangement between the two communities became acute in certain respects making the philosophy of Indian secularism suspect in the eyes of religious minorities.

Undaunted, the Kashmiri leaders put their best foot forward; they assaverated that Kashmir was wedded to secular ideology and would not flinch from it; the State people would protect their liberty with lifeblood and build a society of their dreams. The first important step taken by the State leaders was to prepare a 158-clause constitution of their own for conducting the autonomous status and the authority which the Indian Constitution had specifically given to Jammu and Kashmir alone.

The State Constitution which was ready by November 17, 1956, came into force on January 16, 1957.

Apart from the ways and the methods of using the powers reserved for Jammu and Kashmir, the State Constituent Assembly banished the Maharaja and terminated the hereditary rulership of the Dogra-Hindu dynasty. Unlike the heads of the other state governments in the Indian Union, the head of Kashmir Government was called prime minister, and not chief minister, of the state. The head of the state, to be elected by the people, was significantly called *Sadar-i-Riyasat* (President of the State) and not Governor as in other states. The medium of instruction in the schools and the official language throughout the State was to be Urdu and Hindi recognized as *lingua franca* by the Indian Constitution, was not to enjoy that prominence as in the rest of the country. In this way the sentiments of the Kashmiris were respected and their fears of being immediately absorbed in the overwhelming Hindu majority of India allayed; their autonomy was preserved; their identity left undiminished.

Taking advantage of the special status conferred on it, Kashmir registered unprecedented progress in various fields of social life. The recruitment of Kashmiris in the army had been stopped by the Mughals and successive foreign rulers for over four centuries. To vindicate their honour, the new leadership established National Militia in which were recruited young men from the Valley in different ranks according to their physical fitness and intellectual capacity. By far the most important measure was opening of primary and higher secondary schools at short distances from each other and colleges in big towns; the children of poor classes were provided with the opportunity for education upto high level. What is notable, the education was free from primary stages to the university level as nowhere else in the Indian Union or Pakistan. Rapid changes occurred in the field of education at every level and the number of not only boy students multiplied by several times but girl students also swarmed into educational institutions despite the orthodox and religion-ridden attitude of their parents; while the increase in the number of boys exceeded 70 per cent within two decades, it was over 760 per cent in the case of girls.

Kashmir leaders acted with promptitude, courage and revolutionary zeal in the economic field: jagirs (fiefs) and big landed estates were abolished; ceiling was put on possession of agricultural land; no one was allowed to have more than six acres of cultivable soil. The land seized from absentee landlords was distributed among landless tenants. Old debts amounting to millions of rupees were liquidated to improve the condition of indigent, poverty-stricken, indebted masses. Cottage industries were subsidized and entrepreneurs were financially helped to start small-scale manufacturing units. A number of factories were set up at different places. Many roads were constructed connecting towns, villages and cities. A transport system, cheap, efficient and regular, was established carrying thousands of passengers from one corner of the State to the other every day. All towns and a large number of villages were electrified.

These improvements in the social and economic life of the people were not insignificant. After a long period of wretched poverty and semi-starvation the Kashmiris were witnessing the dawn of a new era of prosperity which was shared more or less by all classes and communities.

But this is a glimpse of only a positive and bright aspect of the autonomous status conferred on the State. Unfortunately, dismal developments, unforeseen by the Constitution-makers occurred to tarnish the fair picture. Worse still, ugliness overshadowed beauty and in course of time the autonomy became a source of hardships and miseries to the people of Kashmir.

The autonomous status could be utilized for the advantage and benefit of the State people from the highest to the humblest as was sagaciously envisioned by the farsighted Constitution-makers but it could also be pressed into service for fulfilment of ambitions and lust for power by designing and unscrupulous leaders. It did not take them long to understand that in the name of democracy they could enrich themselves and fulfil their own ambitions by means, fair or foul. The baseness of Kashmir politics did not come into focus all at once but came gradually to public notice; it did not, however, escape the attention of intelligent observers who pointed it out from the outset.

Early in the fifties, the State was passing through a critical period when a momentous decision had to be taken in the

interest of democracy: Was the special status and autonomy conferred on the State under Article 370 to pave way for integration of Kashmir with the rest of India by assuring State people of their political, social and cultural freedom or was it meant to allow the State politicians, especially Kashmir Muslim leaders, untrammelled opportunity for exploitation of the ignorant, gullible and backward masses? It was a moot point which probably never occurred to stalwarts of the Congress party in early days of independence when they evinced fullest confidence in the honesty, sincerity and love for teeming millions of National Conference leadership. Capture and enjoyment of power brought an awareness to the favourite leaders that the integration of the State with India, however desirable, was antagonistic to their private interest; no sooner than the objective was achieved, their own importance would cease and opinion of State people would grow in importance and weight.

Therefore, to keep people in darkness and not to make them politically conscious and socially awakened became a vested interest of Kashmir politicians. A policy was evolved to make Kashmir Muslims feel perpetually in terror of the hostile Hindu majority and depend upon the local coreligionist leaders for protection against it. Article 370 was frequently maligned and abused, and conditions were created not to allow it to outgrow its utility as originally intended but to make it a permanent feature of the Indian Constitution. In this atmosphere while the leaders thrived, the position of average Kashmiri worsened. The Central leadership of the Congress was caught in a web woven by the National Conference leaders before they could realize what was happening.

When this ugly aspect of the State politics came dimly to their notice or was forced on their attention by realities of the situation, National leaders could, in the beginning, hardly believe it; a little later they pooh-poohed it; and finally felt helpless to effectively deal with it. Consequently, in disregard of the growing resentment of the people, the State was handed over to the leaders as their fief with the result that it kept the problem of integration of Kashmir people with the rest of India alive for the past thirty years and till today.

2

Emergence of a School Teacher as Leader

THROUGHOUT the greater part of their history, Kashmiris have suffered misrule and tyranny. After the death of Sultan Zain-ul-abidin, popularly known as Bud shah (The Great Monarch), in 1372 A.D., the Valley has been subject to despotism and terror. By turns, later Shahmiris, Cheks, Mughals, Pathans, Sikhs and Dogras have harshly ruled over the mountain-girt land fleecing the people and leaving them in abject penury.

Kashmir Valley lost its age-old identity when Raja Gulab Singh, the Dogra Hindu chieftain of Jammu, purchased it from the British rulers after the rout of Sikhs in the Punjab and with their consent and backing created, in 1846, the present State comprising of the three regions of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh under the Treaty of Amritsar.

Administratively forming part of the Indian subcontinent under British Imperialism, the national awakening which came to British India by the turn of the century spread in the late twenties to the State as well. The struggle for India's freedom deeply influenced the Kashmiris who staged, in 1931, a rebellion to liberate themselves from ancient slavery by demanding basic human and political rights and removal of innumerable grievances in social, political and economic fields.

It was an upheaval unknown in contemporary history and like a terrific storm carried everything before it. It was led by a group of Muslim nobles headed by a religious preacher, Mirwaiz Mohammad Yusuf Shah, whom the Muslim community respected as a holy man and a hereditary leader. Men and women of all classes and ages were involved in the movement; youths and zealots were conspicuous among them.

A group of educated young men took a prominent part in the uprising; among them was a devoted school teacher, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, who was the first among the Muslims to earn the M. Sc. degree from the Aligarh Muslim University. He caught the imagination of the Muslim public and sought the patronage of Mirwaiz Yusuf Shah and his colleagues. In public meetings, Abdullah recited verses from the Holy Quran in a sonorous and melodious voice with which he was gifted. He aroused religious passions of the Muslims and stirred their emotions against the atrocities perpetrated by the Hindu Monarchy. This brought him much popularity among the backward, ignorant and religion-ridden masses. Within weeks he became a hero of the Kashmiris, cynosure of less fortunate public men and rival of the old guard. He began to be addressed by his followers as *Sher-i-Kashmir* (Lion of Kashmir).

Soon Abdullah fell out with Mirwaiz Yusuf Shah whom he wanted to outshine and overshadow. A great rift occurred in the Muslim community which could never be closed and has descended from generation to generation. Abdullah organized a band of young men who through hooligan acts fought the followers of Mirwaiz. As early as 1933, Kashmir Muslims were divided into two political sects, the *Bakras* (the goats, as the adherents of Mirwaiz began to be called for sporting beards) and *Shers* (as the followers of Sheikh Abdullah are known).

The two main elements which brought Abdullah into prominence in public life were the arousal of religious passions of the Kashmir Muslims against Dogra rule and Hindu-dominated administration and application of rowdyism against his rivals.

Consequently, though in reality a revolt against Dogra despotism, the uprising of 1931-34 took a communal turn in

which a number of Hindu shops and houses were looted, property destroyed and some Hindus were killed by the miscreants. As a class, therefore, the Hindus opposed the liberation movement and have been antagonistic to it ever since.

In order to understand the essence of Kashmir politics during the last 45 years, it is well to remember that whatever his profession of faith and acceptance of principles, Abdullah has invariably utilized the two weapons whenever occasion arose during the course of his political career to vanquish his political rivals or those others who stood in the way of fulfilment of his ambitions. He made groups of hoodlums part of his political organization like the storm troopers in Nazi Germany. They would terrorize and cow down into silence everyone who disagreed, criticised or opposed Sher-i-Kashmir and his caucus. In late thirties and forties Sheikh himself was seen moving around in Srinagar with a stick in his hand beating men whom he suspected to harbour ill will towards him. Mirwaiz Yusuf Shah could not match Sheikh's bid for popularity and the *Bakras*, unwilling to take up cudgels against the hooligans, shrank in numbers and remained confined in certain pockets of the city and the countryside. The future course of Kashmir politics had thus been determined; it was to be religious in character with upperhand of the hooligans.

In 1932, while still on friendly terms with his first patron, Mirwaiz Yusuf Shah, Sheikh Abdullah, in cooperation with all other Muslim leaders of the period, established Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference under which political activities were carried on legally and constitutionally. After the rift, in search of support from All India Congress leadership and national press, he converted the Muslim Conference into National Conference throwing open its membership to non-Muslims also. But essentially the organization remained as it was before: the same communal outlook, the same approach to life and the same goal to achieve, that is personal ends of the coterie he had formed. Jawaharlal Nehru, who was lacking in the ability to judge people, took a fancy for Abdullah as was his wont for all Muslim adventurers of dubious merits. This enabled Sheikh to get more than what he wanted and deserved:

international fame and stable public position. He was also successful in pushing into background Mirwaiz Yusuf Shah for a number of years.

But to Sheikh's misfortune the issue of partition of the Indian subcontinent on religious grounds assumed the greatest importance in Kashmir politics; Muslims were heavily swayed by Pakistan ideology; the ship of National Conference cracked and was sinking; the ranks of Sheikh's adversaries swelled; Mirwaiz's following gained in numbers by leaps and bounds. The momentous event tried Abdullah's mettle and brought out the salient features of his character: unreliability and proneness to betrayal of followers, friends and associates. Even after having closely associated himself with Congress leaders for a number of years, as the partition loomed large on the horizon, Sheikh consulted wisdom in making friendship with Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the arch enemy of Congress party and Indian nationalism. He invited the Muslim League dictator to visit Kashmir in May 1944, assess the local public opinion, arbitrate between him and Mirwaiz Yusuf and oblige Sheikh by recognizing him as leader of the State Muslims. He assured Jinnah that though secularist by profession he worked wholly and single-mindedly for State Muslims. In contrast to Nehru, Jinnah was able to size up a man accurately. He spent days and weeks in giving patient hearing to local politicians of different shades of opinion before making up his mind. Then on the memorable night of June 17, 1944, in a mammoth public meeting at Jama Masjid he pronounced his verdict unfavourable to Abdullah which sent the latter into jitters; he then fell foul of his guest. For a number of days Sheikh addressed public meetings and denounced Jinnah and incited his followers who assaulted *Bakras* on streets to silence them and also looted several shops.

Before departure from Kashmir, Jinnah issued, on July 24, a statement to the Press in which, among other things, he said:

"I regret that although Sheikh Abdullah and his party and the Muslim Conference discussed matters with me in Delhi and in Lahore before my arrival here, and were good enough to accord me a great reception, and were anxious that I should hear both sides and bring about a settlement, when I, after careful consideration, suggested that the Mussalmans should

organize themselves under one flag and on one platform, not only my advice was not acceptable to Sheikh Abdullah but, as is his habit, which has become a second nature with him, he indulged in all sorts of language of a most offensive and vituperative character in attacking me. My advice to the Mussalmans is that the differences can only be resolved by argument, discussion, exchange of views and reason, and not by goondaism and one thing that I must draw the attention of the Kashmir Government about is that goondaism must be put down at any cost, and there should be a constitutional liberty of speech and freedom of thought, which is the elementary right of every citizen under any civilized form of government".¹

Frustrated and crestfallen, Abdullah returned to the Congress fold and with redoubled vigour championed the cause of Indian nationalism and communal unity. Obviously no alternative was left to him but to be on the side of India for in Muslim Pakistan under the Qaide-Azam Jinnah² he could easily visualize the end of his political career besides public humiliation and even something worse. Yet, while on the one hand he raised the slogan of Hindu-Muslim-Sikh-Itihad (unity of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs) as a challenge to the two-nation theory of the Muslim League, on the other, he continued to send emissaries to Jinnah, seeking pardon and reconciliation on agreeable terms but the triumphant creator of the new Muslim State would hear no appeals until the errant Kashmiri appeared before him in sack cloth and ashes. Thus no choice was left for the Sheikh but to make best of a bad situation. In the dismal days when the Congress party and its nationalism had become a bugbear to the Muslims, political leaders like Abdullah were in great demand in Congress camp. Despite his aberration, he was, therefore, warmly welcomed back and received with open arms. He became the trumpet-bearer of

¹*Dawn* Delhi, dated July 25, 1944. See also *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir* by P.N. Bazaz (1954), Pamposh Publications, P. 212.

²Qaide-Azam (Big Leader) is the title conferred on Jinnah by the Muslims which was officially confirmed by Pakistan National Assembly after it came into existence in 1947.

anti-Pakistan tirades, the loudest opponent of two-nation theory and a staunch supporter of Indian nationalism. The few Muslims in public eye who adhered to Congress ideology were particularly patronized by Jawaharlal Nehru irrespective of the veracity of their statements or sincerity of their professions. Abdullah had an additional merit of belonging to a state where Muslims were in a preponderating majority and therefore *ipso facto* taken as belonging to Pakistan. He was lionized, his courage admired, his honesty and sincerity applauded. Like a new star in the political firmament of India he shone brilliantly dazzling Indian public; he was ranked as an incomparable hero of eminence and distinction.

3

The Story of Betrayals

ACCEPTING the Instrument of Accession, Lord Mountbatten the first governor-general of free India, wrote in his letter dated October 27, 1947, to Maharaja Hari Singh :

“In consistence with their policy that in the case of any (native) state where the issue of accession has been the subject of dispute, the question of accession should be decided in accordance with the wishes of the people of the state, it is my Government’s wish that as soon as law and order have been restored in Kashmir and her soil cleared of the invader the question of state’s accession should be settled by a referendum to the people”.

In a speech from All-India Radio on November 2, 1947, Jawaharlal Nehru confirmed the assurance given by the governor-general by saying :

“We have declared that the fate of Kashmir is ultimately to be decided by the people. That pledge we have given and the Maharaja has supported it, not only to the people of Jammu and Kashmir, but also to the world. We will not and cannot back out of it. We are prepared when peace and law have been established to have a referendum held under international auspices like the United Nations. We want it to be fair and just reference to the people and we

shall accept their verdict. I can imagine no fairer and juster offer”.

When the issue was presented to the United Nations in early 1948, the Security Council, after giving patient hearing to the accredited representatives of the two disputants—India and Pakistan—and after holding long debates, decided that the problem should be settled by holding an impartial and free plebiscite under the auspices of the United Nations.

For four years Nehru repeated the assurance of holding the referendum; then in 1952 he suddenly backed out on the flimsy and irrelevant excuse that since Pakistan had entered into a military alliance with a big power (USA) the question of referring the matter to the State people did not arise and the accession became final and irrevocable. It was clearly a betrayal of the trust the Kashmiris had placed in Nehru as intrepid champion of human and democratic rights of people everywhere in the world.

Fully aware though he was that the Kashmiris were by and large desirous of joining Pakistan, Abdullah made the National Conference to adopt a resolution in October 1947, soon after the partition, declaring that the State of Jammu and Kashmir stood for accession to India. Having picked up a quarrel with redoubtable Jinnah whose vindictive nature was well known, he could not but hitch his wagon to the Indian star to save himself from a dreadful fate that awaited him if the State joined Pakistan. It was a move purely to save himself and build up his political career. All his claims that the step was taken for the good of the minorities or to uphold great principles of secularism and democracy carry little weight. Yet it is worthwhile to examine his emphatic assertions at the time which he subsequently falsified in 1953 to the chargin of his Indian admirers like Nehru.

Explaining on June 1948, why he induced the National Conference to accept the State's accession to India, Abdullah said: “We the people of Jammu and Kashmir, have thrown our lot with Indian people not in the heat of passion or a moment of despair, but by deliberate choice. The union of our people has been fused by the community of ideals and common sufferings in the cause of freedom”. He assured Jawaharlal in

a meeting in 1948: "We have made our choice and linked our destiny with India and nothing can separate us now". On March 7, 1949, he declared: "We have decided to work with and die for India". Addressing the State Constituent Assembly on November 5, 1951, he confessed: "The Indian Constitution has put before the country the goal of secular democracy based on justice, freedom and equality for all without distinction. This is the bedrock of modern democracy. This should meet the argument that the Muslims of Kashmir cannot have security in India where the large majority of population are Hindus. . . The Indian Constitution has amply and finally repudiated the concept of a religious state which is a throw-back to medievalism by guaranteeing the equality of rights of all citizens irrespective of their religion, colour, caste and class".

Such was the burden of Abdullah's statements, speeches and utterances for seven years (1947-1953) as long as India allowed him to rule arbitrarily and despotically over the State people. But towards the end of 1952 it became manifest that the public resentment against Abdullah's authoritarianism was mounting; corruption, nepotism and high-handedness were assuming intolerable proportions. Besides, he was becoming too big for his boots and was, in his moments of vanity, forgetting the fact of Kashmir being only a constituent unit of a federal republic. He was assuming authority to which he was not entitled and adopting measures harmful to the mutual interest of the state and the centre.

Belatedly, the Government of India realized that the policy of depending on one man in disregard of the feelings of the State people in general was unwise and it is incumbent that it should curb the undemocratic, antipeople activities of the Sheikh. Some measures were taken to this end. His inflated ego was hurt but having been spoiled for many years with an exaggerated estimation of himself, he reacted overly resulting in his deposition from prime ministership, arrest and imprisonment on August 9, 1953, for delivering speeches and making statements contradictory to all the solemn declarations of Kashmir's unity with India referred to above. A few hundred of his co-workers,

supporters and hooligans were also sent behind bars. In supporting the Maharaja's proposal in 1947 for State's accession to India without giving a chance to the Kashmiris to express their will on the vital issue, Abdullah had betrayed his own people. Six years later, by exciting his followers to defy the authority of the central government he was betraying those of his patrons who not only gave him refuge and saved him from being consumed by Jinnah's wrath but also put him in power and position of eminence in international field.

Now the pendulum went to the other side. Abdullah flatly denied that the State people had finally or irrevocably decided to accede to India; they had, he stressed, yet to make their choice and should be provided with an opportunity through a free referendum what they desired to do. He saw danger to the security and safety of Kashmir Muslims from predominant Hindu population of India. Gone were the days when he was sure of the affinity of the high principles equally cherished by both Kashmir and India. He began even to appreciate the views of Pakistan leaders and saw sense in their policies and doings. He did not deny that Pakistan had *locus standi* in Kashmir. When his lieutenant Mirza Mohammad Afzal Beg was released in 1955, he formed a new political party called Plebiscite Front, with the main aim of securing the right of self-determination for the State people. Obviously it was a betrayal of the repeated and firm assurances given to India regarding accession of the State for eight years. The slogans of the Plebiscite Front roused religious passions of the Muslims, a large number of whom rallied around its banner in the hope that Abdullah and his colleagues had correctly comprehended their mistake committed in 1947 and were anxious to rectify it.

Abdullah's expectations that Kashmir will rise in flames as a result of his incarceration were belied. No doubt, many Muslims in the Valley were deluded by his new call but many more remembering his treachery and hooligan deeds belittled his somersault and the large majority remained unconcerned at his misfortune. He and his staunch supporters had to remain in wilderness for two decades while some of his more astute and close associates like Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq, D.P. Dhar, Mir Qasim and others captured

the National Conference and ruled the State partly with the financial and armed support of the Union Government and partly with the connivance of the majority of the Kashmiris.

Abdullah was caught in a web of his own making from which he did not know how to extricate himself. The more he applied his tactics of bullying the Union Government which he had successfully done for seven years (1947—1953) the more remote he made the chance of returning to power. Bakshi, Sadiq and others had meanwhile become more adept in the art of manipulating autonomous status of the State to their own advantage and widening the emotional gulf between the central government and the State people. They had learned a lesson from Abdullah's fate not to antagonize the source of political authority by laying too much emphasis on the application of Article 370. They had readily accepted the application of various laws to the State which the Constitution had forbidden to do, without the consent of the Kashmiris. Above all, they had seen to it that Sheikh Abdullah remained in the bad books of the Government of India, the national leadership and the Indian public.

After having been held in custody for eleven years with a small break of four months in 1958, Abdullah was released in 1964, under the policy of liberalization by G.M. Sadiq, then chief minister of Kashmir. Identifying himself with the Plebiscite Front as its patron and strong supporter, Abdullah remained suspect in the eyes of Indian people and could therefore find no way out to curry favour with the central authority. He was not sure whether his expression of repentance would exonerate him from the blunder he had committed in August 1953. He therefore continued to hold a rigid attitude about accession constantly stressing that the Kashmiris must be given the chance to confirm or reject their joining with the rest of India which he now held was done tentatively by his party in 1947 on the morrow of partition. But the Union Government was not prepared to revise its policy towards him until he reaffirmed in unequivocal terms that Kashmir's accession to India was final and irrevocable.

Believing that many years in imprisonment and exile might have made Abdullah wiser and rational in his attitude and

outlook on life, I met him in New Delhi in winter 1968 with a proposal that a convention of State people may be held on non-party basis where the future of Kashmir could be considered and an acceptable formula found out for the solution of accession dispute. Thinking that it might help in ending the impasse to which he had brought the Kashmir politics and his own public career, he agreed and asked me to go ahead with the implementation of the proposal. We formed a sponsors committee of a people's convention of which I became the convener. Other four members were : Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah (chairman), Maulana Mohammad Sayed Masoodi, Mirza Mohammad Afzal Beg and Shamim Ahmad Shamim. Later on we co-opted some other public figures to form the steering committee. They were: Mirwaiz Mohammad Farooq (nephew of Mirwaiz Mohammad Yusuf who had been along with thousands of Kashmiris exiled to Pakistan), Gulam Mohiuddin Karra, Motilal Misri, Balraj Puri, G. M. Shah and Sant Singh Teg. These men were of independent views but not likeminded; the only meeting ground between them was the belief that the Kashmir issue existed and a solution acceptable to the State people alone could resolve it.

The first session of the Jammu and Kashmir State People's Convention was held in Srinagar on October 18, 1968; it was attended by 260 delegates hailing from all parts of the State. Among the participants, besides politicians, were educationists, lawyers, journalists, retired civil servants, judges, doctors and businessmen. The convention was inaugurated by Jayaprakash Narayan. About 25 delegates were non Muslim. No fewer than 56 papers presenting different viewpoints on the accession problem were read at the Convention.

The Convention unanimously adopted a resolution "reaffirming the principle that a solution of the problem, acceptable to the people of the State, keeping in view the interests of all regions, can alone resolve the dispute and restore normalcy and tranquillity in Jammu and Kashmir and in the subcontinent, instructed the steering committee to properly tabulate the presented material for submission to and discussion in the second session in order to pave the way for finding a peaceful, democratic, just, realistic and lasting solution of the issue".

The Convention did not fulfil the ambitions of Abdullah as he had expected because it brought him no nearer to the achievement of personal power. He adopted an ambivalent position on the one hand stressing that accession to India was not final and on the other pressurizing India to take him into confidence by installing him in power as the genuine representative of the State people. He did not succeed in it but only caused delay in holding the second session of the Convention until May, 1970. The pourparlers and the outcome of the second session were disappointing; the enthusiasm, sincerity and sense of purpose witnessed in the first session were no longer in evidence. Both Sheikh and Beg avoided tackling vital issues and postponed taking concrete and substantial decisions which could have lent reality to the Convention and fulfilled the hopes raised by the first session. It was clear that Abdullah had little desire to find a democratic solution of the Kashmir problem because his sole aim of capturing power was nowhere in sight. There was no reason to believe that by long suffering and reflection in prison he had emerged a changed man with faith in democracy and freedom of the people. It was clear that he had learned nothing and unlearned nothing. At the conclusion of the second session the delegates went back sad and disappointed with little hope of achieving any fruitful results from the State People's Convention. To everybody's dismay, all efforts to establish democratic traditions and norms in State politics had proved abortive. I decided not to remain associated with the Convention any longer so as not to become instrumental in assisting Abdullah to achieve his personal ends.

Thereafter Sheikh Abdullah spent a couple of years in wooing through different channels the Congress Government at New Delhi to restore him to power. But he did not indicate any change in his position regarding accession. Therefore, there could not be any favourable response to his overtures. The failure compelled him to revive the Convention which had at least kept him in public eye.

I was surprised to have a letter from Abdullah written on April 5, 1973, in which he complained that I did not bother even to phone him up for two years, "We have been colleagues of long standing and have worked together through great stress

and strain. Naturally I had expected a call from you", he wrote. Coming to the main purpose of writing to me, he pleaded :

"You will remember that you sponsored the idea of holding the convention of various shades of political opinion in the State in order to evolve a solution to the Kashmir problem acceptable to all. I accepted the idea and we started to work it out. We went through different phases and as far as I can say we did make considerable progress in thrashing out the various problems and identifying the basic issues involved. However, as ill luck would have it, we were again involved in political situations which prevented further progress in the pursuit of the objectives we had set for ourselves. But now the atmosphere has undergone considerable change and there is a feeling growing all over the State as well as in India that some effective steps ought to be taken which will end the stalemate over Kashmir."

Proceeding further he revealed : "On my return from Delhi I had the chance to meet friends of various shades of political opinion in Jammu who unanimously suggested that the activities of the convention should be revived and another session called in Srinagar to take up the threads left at the last session. I welcomed the suggestion wholeheartedly. Upon arrival in Srinagar I had a talk with Beg Sahib, Maulana Masoodi and Shamim Sahib, the other co-sponsors of the convention. It was agreed that a meeting of the five sponsors should be held to take stock of the situation and decide the future course of action".

Concluding the letter, Abdullah added :

"I will not be wrong if I say that the idea of the convention is your baby and it is your bounden duty to see that the convention achieves the objectives for which it was convened. You have a very important role to play in making it a success. May I, therefore, request you to take a few days out of your very busy schedule and come to Srinagar to give your other colleagues the benefit of your valuable advice in the matter. Any day which is convenient to you will suit us. I hope that you will not disappoint me."

Having undergone some very unhappy experiences during the days of second session of the Convention and having

realized that the Sheikh was not a man to be relied upon for the establishment of democracy in Kashmir because he was primarily actuated and indeed dominated by the idea of gaining personal power, I could see through his suggestion and was reluctant to accept it. I sent him a reply that he was responsible for the failure of the second session and it was futile to call another session. Until he was prepared to change his basic approach to Kashmir politics such endeavours were bound to end in smoke. Besides, I added, he had by his behaviour provoked the hostility of some of the distinguished members of the Convention like Maulana Mosoodi and Mirwaiz Farooq whom we may not be able to mollify.

Another reason, too, prevented me from accepting the proposal. I was scheduled to leave for America on a trip of four months on May 10 which made it difficult for me to meet Abdullah. But his insistence, and persuasion of some mutual friends made me to yield and I went to Srinagar on May 7 to have an exchange of ideas with him. We were successful in holding a meeting of the sponsors' committee on the same date in the evening at his residence which lasted many hours. At the end we drew certain conclusions. Since I was of the strong view that the leaders of the Convention should no longer remain ambiguous about their opinions and the Convention should place a cut and dried formula before the country, I was directed to prepare a draft manifesto for consideration of the sponsors' committee. The manifesto would then be placed before the steering committee for its approval. After having undergone necessary alterations, additions and amendments, if any, the manifesto was expected to be ready by September, 1973 when I would return from the States. We also agreed that the third session of the Convention would take place by the end of the year for examining the document. If approved by the delegates, the manifesto would be published and widely circulated among the State people for their final acceptance.

The plan appealed to me as sensible and bearing seeds of democratic procedure. I returned to New Delhi and as very little time was at my disposal, I spent every minute to prepare a draft of the manifesto. On the eve of my departure for the States I despatched its two typed copies through two different

channels to Abdullah to ensure that it reached him. I had no knowledge during the period of my absence in America of what the Sheikh, the sponsors' committee or the steering committee did with the draft manifesto. On my return to India on September 14, I eagerly waited in New Delhi to hear about it. I wrote to the Sheikh and enquired from S.A. Shamim but both had nothing to report about it. Then to my amazement I read in the press a statement by Abdullah to *London Times* saying that he believed the accession of Kashmir State to India was complete and final, only he had differences about the quantum of autonomy the State could enjoy under the Constitution. This was a *volte face* in view of what the Sheikh had been holding during the two sessions of the Convention. I felt particularly aggrieved. With one short public statement he had undone all our work and given the Convention an indecent burial. It was subsequently revealed that the statement had been inspired by a stalwart of the Congress party and was in line with Sheikh's aim of achieving personal power.

A few months later small and insignificant reports began to appear in the national press that on the basis of the *Times* interview negotiations had started between M. A. Beg representing Abdullah and G. S. Parthasarathi, an emissary of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, to have a deal over the future of Kashmir. Without any qualms but in a characteristic manner, Abdullah had launched on a fresh adventure to achieve his own ends behind the back of State people.

The protracted negotiations were carried on secretly and the Kashmiris were not taken into confidence until the deal was struck early in 1975. The outcome put down in the shape of an agreement between Sheikh Abdullah and Mrs. Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister, is known as Kashmir Accord. It was presented to the Indian Parliament along with all the relevant correspondence on February 24, 1975, with a statement by the Prime Minister. Some admissions and remarks by the concerned give the essence of the Accord. In his letter dated February 11, 1975, Abdullah said: "The accession of the State of Jammu and Kashmir to India is not a matter in issue". Mirza Afzal Beg stated on February 6, 1975, that: "In the changed circumstances plebiscite had become irrelevant and that the name and objectives

of the Plebiscite Front have to be changed accordingly". It will be recalled that both the leaders had rigidly insisted till the last in the State People's Convention that accession was the main problem and the only way to solve it was the holding of a plebiscite. As a matter of fact, they refused to budge an inch from this position. Now that their aim of securing personal power was in sight both of them readily abandoned the position and servilely accepted the Central Government's terms.

To keep his face before the Kashmiris, the Sheikh submitted a demand that whatever laws had been passed and applied to Kashmir during the period when he was not in power (1953-1975) may be revised and those unacceptable to the State people abrogated. To this Mrs. Gandhi gave a categorical reply in her letter of February 2, 1975: "I have already explained to you that the clock cannot be put back and we have to take note of the realities of the situation". In her statement before the Parliament also she reiterated this position: "Sheikh Abdullah was very anxious that, to start with, the constitutional relationship between the state and the centre would be as it was in 1953 when he was in power. It was explained to him that the clock could not be put back in this manner". She added: "Mirza Afzal Beg pressed for the transfer of provisions relating to Fundamental Rights to the State Constitution, the removal of the supervision and control of the Election Commission of India over elections to the State Legislature, and the modification of Article 356 to require the State government's concurrence before imposing Presidents Rule to the State. It was not found possible to agree to any of these proposals". And Abdullah despite his strong views on these issues, accepted the Prime Minister's decision.

When this episode took place in the history of Kashmir I, having undergone two major operations, was lying in sickbed at my New Delhi residence. One day, towards the end of February 1975, Abdullah dropped in to convey to me the tidings of his "great achievement" as he put it. I was not in a good physical condition to talk but in a few hushed words I managed to convey to him that I did not approve of the Accord. To his offer that I should assist him in shouldering the responsibility of running the Government, my wife, who was

sitting on my bed, firmly and rather harshly told him that it was impossible for me to do so.

Jubilant at his achievement which was in reality humiliation of Kashmir patriots in general and conventionists in particular, Abdullah assisted by Afzal Beg assumed power with the support of the majority Congress Legislative Party in Kashmir Assembly, in early March, 1975. Another dismal chapter of his long unsavoury political life started. In his letter to Mrs. Indira Gandhi dated February 11, 1975, he affirmed : "The country is passing through a critical period and it is all the more necessary for all of us who cherish the ideals of democracy, secularism and socialism, to strengthen your hands as the leader of the Nation and it is in this spirit that I am offering my whole-hearted co-operation".

When the Kashmir Accord was published, Abdullah repeatedly assured the people in his public utterances that he is bound to get it approved by the State people but during the two years of his rule he never had the courage to do so. He also claimed that he had agreed to be the head of the government on the condition that the laws passed during the period of his being out of office would be reviewed and the ones unacceptable to the State people would be amended or abrogated as necessary. But no move was made in this direction.

The two years of Abdullah's rule proved a grim period. The Sheikh started with a number of promises to streamline the administration, uproot corruption, weed out inefficiency and implement plans for economic progress of the State so as to end unemployment and make the country prosperous. But in practice he succeeded in accentuating the evils that had been corroding body politic of the State. He employed his wife, Begum Akbar Jan, two sons, Tariq and Farooq, daughter in-law, Mrs. Farooq, son-in law, G. M. Shah and many among his kith and kin to government or semi-government posts on fat salaries. While on the one hand he promoted all those officials who had been of any service to him during the years when he was out of office even if they were notoriously corrupt, on the other, he discharged, degraded or prematurely retired such public servants who had been honest but indifferent or unfriendly with him.

He raised the salaries of the ministers, sanctioned Rs. 1800 as monthly rent for their houses and Rs. 50,000 as annual rent for furniture. He paid from public exchequer lakhs of rupees as arrear payments to those of his supporters who had been dismissed for disloyalty to the State in 1953 and pensions to favourites who had suffered imprisonment. At the same time, he stopped subsidy allowed by the previous governments to put the prices of food grains down through which poorer sections of the people used to get their rations of essential commodities at low rates; he stopped giving of free food and milk to poor patients in the State hospitals (provided since Dogra rule) most of whom came from countryside and could not afford to make arrangement for having food in cities or towns.

During the inglorious Sheikh regime there was a rise in the number of unemployed persons, and highly educated young men and women approached him for relief only to be driven out from his office with humiliation and abuse. While he spent enormous sums on pomp and show to glorify his office, he became niggard in spending the crores of rupees made available to the State government by the centre for the economic growth of the Kashmiris. The public resentment was on the increase.

In the end of 1976, to the consternation of the Kashmiris, Abdullah got a Land Grants proposal passed by Governor's ordinance which provided for giving of land to outside capitalists. The State Subject Definition adopted as early as 1927 under the Maharaja's rule disallowed any outsider from purchasing land in the State. The Land Grants ordinance would have virtually revoked the provisions of the State Subject Definition considered inviolable by all classes and communities in Jammu and Kashmir. Throughout history the scenic beauties of Kashmir have tempted powerful and wealthy outsiders to have slices of land in the State. Kashmir peasants are the poorest lot in India. It was feared that if left unprotected by legislation it would not be surprising if outsiders with money bags come and grab the land through purchases from the penurious Kashmiris as did jews in Palestine from poverty-stricken Arabs thus either driving out the Kashmiris from their ancestral homes or reducing them to the position of slaves. A provision attached to the Definition of State Subject provided against it and the Land Grants ordinance

was an invasion into it which scared the State people and angered intellectuals no less than politicians. But before the ordinance could be passed into an Act and put on the statute book, the tide turned.

4

The Anti-Abdullah Wave

ELECTIONS to the Lok Sabha (People's House of Indian Parliament) were ordered to be held in early March, 1977, by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. The State of Kashmir shares six seats in the Lok Sabha. By an agreement these were equally divided between the Congress and the National Conference (N.C.). One of the two National Conference seats in the Valley was allotted to Begum Akbar Jan, wife of Abdullah, which the patriots took as a challenge and decided to oppose her. Maulvi Iftikhar Hussain Ansari, member of the State Legislative Council, offered himself as an independent candidate. Attention was focussed on Abdullah's nepotism. On March 1, introducing the Begum as a candidate, Abdullah complained in a public statement that "his opponents had ganged up to carry on a campaign of vilification against him in the Kashmir Valley". He said "he never wanted the Begum to contest election but my party did not agree". Regarding employment of his two sons he explained "one of them had gone abroad to purchase equipment for the Sher-i-Kashmir National Medical Institute and all the expenses were borne by the concerned firms and not by the institute or the government". Another son of his, Tariq, he said, "had gotten a job in the State Tourism Development Corporation on his own merits". "Should my son starve and not accept a job in the

state just because he is my son".¹

In scores of public meetings and in the local press hundreds of young men and women more highly educated than the two sons of Abdullah retorted : "What about us ? Should we starve and be thrown on the streets ?"

The other independent candidate for Parliamentary election from Baramulla constituency, Syed Ali Shah Gilani, who stood against the National Conference candidate, Abdul Ahad Vakil, had been imprisoned by Abdullah and was not released until the eve of the election.

As the tempo of the election mounted and Abdullah saw the chances of success of the Begum diminishing, his hooligan band, the storm troopers of his party, was set in motion. Maulvi Iftikhar was beaten by ruffians outside the magistrate's office after he filed his nomination papers. A jeep belonging to him was set on fire on the Habba Kadal bridge on March 6 when a meeting was in progress in the nearby chowk to be addressed by him. Undaunted the Maulvi arrived and delivered a bold speech criticising Abdullah and exposing his misdeeds. While he spoke there was disturbance in the meeting. He, however, continued his speech.²

Realizing the ferocity of opposition to his rule, Abdullah in a press conference on March 2, protested that "for the first time in 45 years of his public life some one had questioned his integrity. It was a matter of shame for the people of Kashmir that the man, who had fearlessly led them through thick and thin, who had suffered imprisonment for them and who had made many other sacrifices, should be attacked in such a manner". He asked : "Will Sheikh Abdullah sell away Kashmir as is being alleged by pip-squeaks today ? Nothing is dearer to my heart than Kashmir. All that I want is (referring to Land Grants ordinance) that hoteliers from outside should be allowed to build hotels here on leased land to promote tourism". He appealed to the people "to vote for his wife in such overwhelming numbers as to make all other candidates

¹*Indian Express*, March 2, 1977.

²*Indian Express*, March 7, 1977.

opposing her forfeit their deposits".¹ *The Times of India* correspondent reported that "resentment against the chief minister, Sheikh Abdullah, finds expression in the large attendance at meetings addressed by opposition candidates. Thus a young Maulvi is posing a serious challenge to the chief minister's wife, Begum Abdullah, in Srinagar".²

Reporting a few days later on March 14, the correspondent said: "What was expected to be an easy walkover for the Begum has turned into a bitter contest which has divided communities, split families and led to verbal duels at street corners among friends . . . Twice in the past three days, the Maulvi alleged that attempts were made on his life while he was addressing public meetings. He charged his opponents with burning a stage where he was scheduled to address a meeting yesterday . . . In the past even when Sheikh Abdullah was out of power, nobody in the Valley could raise even a little finger against him. But now not only his government but also a member of his family is criticised".

On March 9, black flags, hostile slogans and shouts of "go back" greeted Mirza Afzal Beg at an election meeting in Sohajna Island 16 km. away from Jammu. The police fired five rounds of tear gas shells, and made a lathi charge when women of the village, who outnumbered men in the audience, protested against the arrest on the spot of 15 students while putting questions to Beg. Beg who had barely started addressing the people abandoned his speech and ran away from the meeting.³

For having bravely faced Abdullah's threats and refusing to withdraw from the contest against the Begum, Maulvi Iftikhar Hussain emerged overnight a rallying personality of anti-government and anti-Sheikh elements in the Kashmir Valley. But not even the ardent admirers of the Maulvi expected him to win. Nevertheless, the Sheikh and his party were so nervous about the outcome of the contest that they resorted to hooliganism, capture of polling booths, and rigging of the elections in general. By these criminal methods Begum Abdullah won by a

¹*Times of India*, March 3, 1977.

²*Ibid.*

³*Indian Express* March 11, 1977.

majority of votes though Maulvi Iftikhar too secured no fewer than nearly eighty thousand votes.

Violence erupted in the wake of Begum's victory. The hooligans killed Ghulam Mohammad Bhat near Amada Kadal on March 23 to terrorize the opponents of the National Conference. Bhat had refused to accept the version of All India Radio that Begum Abdullah had won the election, when coerced to join singing paeans of praise to glorify Abdullah.

In the Kashmir Legislative Assembly an adjournment motion seeking discussion on rigging of elections, hiring of goondas by National Conference and creation of fear psychosis among the voters, was moved on March 23. Charges of letting loose reign of terror against opponents and stealing of votes to ensure victory of two National Conference candidates in the Valley were levelled against the Sheikh government by eleven members of the Assembly including A. G. Lone and A. R. Kabli. Lone remarked that "Sheikh Abdullah who in the past criticised Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad and G. M. Sadiq for rigging the elections had tarnished his own image". Kabli charged Abdullah with making an inflammatory speech to incite people to start harassing National Conference opponents. Attempts were made even to strain relations between Shias and Sunnis. Such tactics to divide communities had not been adopted even during the Dogra rule".¹

The simmering resentment against the misrule of Abdullah came to the surface as a consequence of the Lok Sabha polls. The Congress Legislative Party in the State Assembly which was the mainstay of the Government lost faith in its honesty and capability. The leader of the party, G. L. Dogra, criticising the Sheikh regime declared in a statement on March 25 :

"The economic condition of the common man has not improved. On the contrary it has deteriorated. Instead of the secular forces working in unison to defeat reaction and communalism, the Government has functioned in a manner which has led to erosion of values we cherish. Keeping in view the democratic norms and also the fact that the Congress Legislative Party enjoys a clear majority in the Assembly, we would be

¹*Times of India*, March 25, 1977.

failing in our duty if we do not fulfil our responsibility to serve the people of the State effectively, and be responsive to their aspirations".¹

The stage was set for toppling the Sheikh government.

In the 75-member State Legislative Assembly the Congress had a strength of 46 and enjoyed the support of two other M.L.A.s. Five members belonging to the Jamati Islami were prepared to join hands with Congress to drive out Sheikh from power; so were four M.L.A.s belonging to Janata Party and six to Abdul Ghani Lone group. Only eight M.L.A.s including chief minister Abdullah and his lieutenant Afzal Beg, belonged to the National Conference.

On March 26, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, President of the J&K Pradesh Congress, sent a letter to the Governor, L. K. Jha, withdrawing support of the Party to Sheikh government and demanding to form a new ministry which it had a right to do on the basis of its strength in the Assembly. But, at the same time, Abdullah wrote to the Governor seeking dissolution of the Assembly and demanding fresh polls. Although the Congress party enjoyed a clear and absolute majority in the Assembly and the Sheikh had only a small minority of eight members at his back, Governor Jha, taking shelter under Section 92 of the Jammu and Kashmir Constitution ordered the dissolution of the Assembly and imposed Governor's rule on the State for a period of six months. He did not even care to consult the leader of the majority party before arriving at the decision which was politically and constitutionally wrong and morally unfair. Dr. Karan Singh, a former *Sadar-i-Riyasat* of the State, in an eloquent speech in the Lok Sabha called it "a sordid act of political betrayal" and "an outrageous performance".¹ It was an undue favour shown by the Governor to Abdullah to raise his prestige in the State people.

The National Conference issued a statement saying that "Jha's was a democratic verdict which is in accord with the aspirations of the people".² But other party leaders held diffe-

¹*Times of India*, March 30, 1977.

²*Ibid.*, March 28, 1977.

rent views. "It is gross violation of democratic norms, "protested V. M. Raju, general secretary of the All India Congress Committee. "The Governor did not even care to consult the leader of majority party before arriving at a decision".¹ The State Congress Legislative Party called Jha's proclamation as "unconstitutional and immoral" and "murder of democracy".² Of course, Abdullah welcomed the Governor's decision by saying that, "it was the only right course that could have been adopted under the prevailing circumstances". He, significantly, added : "The interests of the State and the well being of its people are safe in the hands of the Governor".³

The dissolution of the Assembly did not satisfy the National Conference leaders. Characteristically, pressing their hooligan squads into service they took the battle to the streets. Clashes occurred in Srinagar between them and the people. On March 26, police burst tear gas shells and repeatedly used lathis to disperse unruly mobs who clashed at a number of places. Tracing the genesis of the trouble the National News Agency, Samachar, reported : "The incidents came in the wake of demonstrations by the supporters of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and counter-demonstrations by his opponents . . . Trouble started when a group of National Conference workers went round the city in the morning asking shop keepers to observe hartal to protest against the Congress decision to withdraw its support to Sheikh Abdullah's Government. The members of the Kashmir Motor Drivers Association defied them and refused to stop plying of vehicles. Soon afterwards groups of young men marched up and down the fashionable Maulana Azad Road and Maqbul Sherwani Road shouting anti-Abdullah and pro-Janta Party slogans. They urged shop keepers to ignore the hartal call and keep their establishments open. Following this, some shop keepers who had pulled down their shutters reopened their establishments. Anti-Abdullah demonstrators took out processions in several parts of the city. They ransacked National Conference offices at a number of places and pulled down

¹*Times of India*, March 28, 1977.

²*Ibid.*

³*Indian Express*, March 30, 1977.

the Party's signboards. A large crowd which marched along the Maqbul Sherwani Road pulled down the signboard of Sher-i-Kashmir Park and burnt his (Sheikh Abdullah's) effigy".¹

Whether or not the dissolution of the State Legislative Assembly was constitutional, it is certain that the people heaved a sigh of relief when Abdullah Government was ousted from power. "It has ended a black regime which was foisted on the country through an Accord", I said in a statement on March 30, "arrived at two years ago behind the back of the State people to bring an unwanted clique to power". Stirred by prevailing enthusiasm I added: "In the free political climate generated by recent upsurge in India hopes have been raised that for the first time in post-independence era, there will be fair elections to the State legislature. A devoutly wished opportunity will be afforded to the State people to elect their true well-wishers as their representatives and also to expose and defeat those notorious elements who repeatedly betrayed them, gave solemn pledges at sacred shrines to serve the country only to break them, debased public life for personal gains, resorted to highhandedness, nepotism, corruption and immoral practices for amassing wealth and property while miseries were heaped on humble folk". I appealed to those who had ceaselessly toiled but unsuccessfully fought against afore-mentioned evils, "to rally round the banner of democracy and forgetting their differences unite to destroy the common foe of new despotism".

While Abdullah, ousted from power, was travelling outside the State going from door to door of leaders of various political parties and groups to seek support, an anti-Abdullah wave was gradually spreading over the Valley. Hostile demonstrations were held by opponents of National Conference, specially youths and students in different towns. On April 7, when Abdullah was scheduled to return to Srinagar his followers wanted to give him a grand reception and much money was spent on conveyance of peasants from the countryside to a public rally at Lal Chowk in Srinagar. But while on his way from Jammu he had to face angry youth and students who

¹*Indian Express*, March 26, 1977.

shouted slogans against him. At Khanabal dak bungalow a public meeting was organized to be addressed by him. Apprehending hostile demonstrations, the militant National Conference workers attacked the college nearby to terrorize students in which the police were reported to have assisted them. Every room of the college was ransacked, furniture broken, teachers and boys beaten up and girls molested. It was a poor and much disturbed meeting which Abdullah addressed. The incident have had repercussions not only in the town but also beyond it. The people in nearby Anantnag were deeply agitated over the atrocities perpetrated by National Conference toughs and the police. A hartal was called on April 8. About 500 students of the college carried out a procession in the town raising anti-Abdullah and anti-police slogans. In Srinagar students of the Kashmir University and affiliated colleges held similar demonstrations under the banner of speedily formed youth and student *morcha* (front). Placards were displayed in processions in the city denouncing Abdullah's authoritarianism and expressing solidarity with the aggrieved students of Anantnag¹

The agitation was intensified and it spread to other places in the Valley during the next few days. Girls joined the boys in anti-Abdullah demonstrations on April 11 when they marched through the main thoroughfares of Srinagar. They protested against the behaviour of the police and National Conference workers who had committed excesses on the students and teachers of the Government Degree College at Khanabal. Ding-dong battles were fought between supporters of Abdullah and his opponents. There was widespread resentment against the Sheikh and his hoodlums. Police burst tear gas shells at many a place to control the situation. Students in Sopore joined the fray and brought out a procession in sympathy with Khanabal agitators. According to *Times of India* correspondent "as the mob fanned out in various directions in Habba Kadal, Khanabal and several other localities, some girls who were with the students, were allegedly molested by National Conference workers in the Habba Kadal area".²

¹*Times of India*, April 7 & 8, 1977.

²*Ibid.*, April 12, 1977.

Governor Jha ignored the incidents at first but the deteriorating situation and the mounting intensity of public wrath made him apprehensive and he decided to appoint, on April 11, a senior judicial officer to conduct an inquiry into the incidents which took place at Khanabal on April 7 and 8. Next day, Mirza Saifuddin, sessions judge, was named as the officer to hold the inquiry and submit a report within two months.¹ The district magistrate also issued orders under section 144 Cr. P. Code prohibiting processions and public meetings for one month within the limits of Srinagar Municipality. Abdullah and his cohorts were saved from falling prey to the public wrath.

Like rats deserting a sinking ship, the few thoughtful members still left in the organization began to leave National Conference along with the hundreds of their followers. Among them were Shamim Ahmed Shamim, former Member Parliament, Ghulam Mohammad Bawan, Administrator Srinagar Municipality, Balraj Puri, President Jammu Province National Conference, Peerzada Ali Shah, Vice President Kashmir Province National Conference, G. Mohiuddin, lawyer and close associate of Afzal Beg in his negotiations with G. Parthasarathi as also Syed Manzoor Ahmed, Mohammad Amin Bhat, Ashok Bhan, youthful lawyers of Srinagar. This was followed by the exit of advocates, teachers, doctors, trade union workers and businessmen in different parts of the Valley. The local press carried innumerable statements in March and April issued by individuals and groups of men denouncing National Conference leadership and Abdullah's dictatorial tendencies and nepotism. The two-year National Conference rule came in for harsh criticism for its corruption and lawlessness. In the beginning of April a stream of intelligentsia announced their dissociation from the party. An anti-Abdullah wave was sweeping over the State, particularly in the Valley of Kashmir.

¹The report of the Inquiry by the judge never saw the light of the day for reasons which only the Kashmir government can reveal.

Bid for Alliance

SINCE the independence of India, Abdullah had depended for capture of power by his party in the State not on the support of the people whom, as we saw, he had alienated from himself but on the Central Government which was in the hands of the Congress Party. To his cost and dismay he had painfully realized that he was thrown out of office in August, 1953, and for a larger part of his wanderings in wilderness he remained in detention or exile because he was at logger heads with the ruling party in New Delhi. When, therefore, the Congress Party in Kashmir withdrew its support to his government forcing him to go out of office he looked towards new rising Janata Party which had defeated the Congress at the polls in the Parliamentary elections of March, 1977. Besides, he could not and did not remain indifferent to the mounting anti-Abdullah wave in the Valley which was assuming threatening proportions.

In India, Janata Party came into existence as a result of the unification of several national and regional political parties to overthrow the dictatorship of Mrs. Indira Gandhi who had made herself infamous by resorting to heinous deeds during an atrocious rule by imposition of draconian laws under emergency provisions of the Constitution. The five constituents of the Janata Party were: Jana Sangh, Bharatiya Lok Dal (BLD), Congress (O), Socialist Party and Congress for Democracy, a

splinter group of those who fully supported Indira Gandhi till the last but deserted her on the eve of election thus precipitating her downfall. Janata had succeeded in exploiting the Indian people's anger against Indira Gandhi and defeating Congress at the polls. In northern India the victory of Janata Party was spectacular; it had captured the imagination of the masses who adored it. In 1977, Janata wave had replaced Indira wave of 1972. Abdullah lost no time in extending his hand of alliance to Janata Party with the double aim of defending himself against the onslaughts of opposition in Kashmir Valley and of recapturing lost political power in the State.

After being thrown out of office on March 26, Abdullah did not go to meet the people in the Valley as he should have done if he thought they were the real source of power and sovereignty as he used to assert, but he proceeded immediately to New Delhi to contact Janata leaders and seek the Party's alliance. The Janata leader he met first on April 1, was Atal Behari Vajpayee, the distinguished Jan Sangh stalwart and the External Affairs Minister of the Union Government. On the same day, he had talks with Jagjivan Ram, Chairman of Congress for Democracy and Defence Minister in the Janata cabinet. The next day, accompanied by Mirza Afzal Beg, he also met the Union Ministers Prakash Singh Badal, George Fernandes and Mohan Dharia. He appealed to all these Janata leaders to accept him as a Janata ally. On April 3, he went to Bombay and sought a meeting in Jaslok Hospital with the ailing Jayaprakash Narayan who exercised tremendous influence over Janata rank and file. The Sheikh's purpose was to persuade Narayan, an old friend and sympathizer, to help him in securing patronage of the Janata.

It appears that the Janata leaders were asking for a *quid pro quo* and making demands which the Sheikh could not fulfil without humiliation to himself. No one had forgotten that during the whole period of Emergency rule he had paid fulsome tributes to Indira Gandhi and the Congress Party when the people of India suffered untold miseries and numerous atrocities. He was asked to atone for it and give a clean bill of health to Janata Party. He was ready and unhesitant to do both. On April 2, a staff correspondent of the *Times of India* reported :

"Sheikh Abdullah has changed his stance and started criticising the Congress. He is making a desperate bid to reach an understanding with the Janata Party to win a majority of seats in the Assembly elections which are likely to be held in June. At a recent public meeting, the Sheikh went out of his way to describe two former Jan Sangh MLA's as 'brothers' ".¹ According to Samachar, the Sheikh, in a public speech said : "The Congress had destroyed all the values and norms of democracy, but the electorate had paid it the proper remuneration by burying it in northern India". He accused the Congress for "strangling democracy during the 18 months of emergency". In the same speech he expressed the hope that "democracy will undoubtedly thrive under the new Janata Party government at the centre".²

To appease the Janata leaders and establish his bona fides, Sheikh Abdullah instructed his wife, Begum Akbar Jan, and Abdul Ahad Vakil, members of the Lok Sabha, to declare their voluntary support to the Janata Party. They did so by issuing a joint statement in which they affirmed that "they will support all those programmes and policies of the Government which are in accordance with the aims and objectives laid down in the Constitution of India".³

But Abdullah had lost credibility in the eyes of Janata leaders and, therefore, even this surrender did not suffice and proved of little avail. After thoroughly exploring the situation in New Delhi and Bombay, he returned empty-handed to Srinagar where fierce opposition was awaiting him.

He had, however, not abandoned the hopes of appeasing Janata leaders by blackening the face of the Congress. On arrival in Srinagar he delivered a diatribe against Indira Gandhi and the Congress in a public speech at Lal Chowk. He said : "Mrs. Gandhi used to change governments in the states at her own sweet will and pleasure. But such is not the case now. The people are the real masters and we have left everything in the

¹*Times of India*, April 3, 1977.

²*Ibid.*, April 1, 1977.

³*Indian Express*, April 1, 1977.

people's hands". Referring to the Kashmir Congress he fulminated : "The Congress in Kashmir has wrought the ruin for the people and we shall rid the State of this dirty gutter".¹

Apart from being known as unreliable for which he had earned notoriety, Abdullah was thwarted in his design to forge alliance with Janata by his many opponents who warned national leaders against falling in his trap. Telegrams and letters were despatched by hundreds of people to Jayaprakash Narayan, Prime Minister Morarji Desai and Chandra Shekhar, dissuading them from accepting the Sheikh's offer. Shamim Ahmed Shamim, G.M.D. Karra, A.G. Goni, Iftikhar Hussain Ansari, A.R. Kabli, A.G. Lone and other well known public figures met the leaders in New Delhi advising them to be wary of rehabilitating the Sheikh in State people's estimation which was certain to damage the newly acquired reputation of Janata and impede the growth of rising democratic forces in the State.

Shamim delivered a personal letter of mine to Jayaprakash Narayan on April 4 in which I reminded him of the fiasco in which State People's Convention (in holding of which he had played a part) ended entirely due to the unpardonable betrayal of the Sheikh. I told Jayaprakash :

"Reports are circulating in Kashmir as well as in New Delhi that Sheikh Sahib is making frantic efforts to secure the support of the Janata Party and your blessings to recapture power in the State. If there is any truth in this, I would request you in the interest of justice, human values and democratic ideals not to lend any illegitimate help to him. He has already rigged the election to the Lok Sabha and wants to do the same in the forthcoming assembly election for which he seeks and needs the connivance of the Central Government and its representatives in the State". I added : "My earnest appeal is let the Sheikh face the people at the polls and let the Central Government and its administration remain impartial in having free and fair elections to the State Legislature. After having defeated totalitarianism in India, let not the Janata Party tarnish its name by going out of the way in assisting a leader or in any way identifying

¹*Indian Express*, April 8, 1977.

itself with him who has lost the popularity and dignity he once possessed”.

I concluded the letter by saying :

“I have no doubt in my mind that if for any expediency whatsoever Janata Party or you give any indication of partiality towards Sheikh and his clique, the State people, especially the Muslims, will lose the last remnant of hope in establishing democracy in their homeland within the framework of Indian Constitution. It is not for me to tell you what disastrous consequences can follow such a depressed mental state of people.”

Although keen to retain the Kashmir State as integral part of the Indian Union, neither the Congress nor the Janata leaders cared or have had leisure to study the State's problem objectively, in depth and detail. On the one hand, Abdullah's expiation for past aberrations under Emergency and profuse praise of Janata ideals, but, on the other, stiff opposition of Kashmiris to their alliance with him, put the Janata leaders on the horns of a dilemma. Talks in the Janata circles on the subject revealed that they were divided. Some of the high-ups in Janata hierarchy were eager to associate the Party with the Sheikh considering this to be a path of least resistance even though it meant the continuance of the denounced Kashmir policy of Nehru and his daughter. This group in the Janata wanted to help the Sheikh to recapture power in the State or at any rate secure a few seats in the Legislative Assembly with the Sheikh by allowing him to have the major share. But other Janata leaders stoutly opposed any such proposal. Not having sufficient time to study the problem most of the leaders were indecisive and could not make up their mind either way. They wanted to muddle through and thought as the situation developed events would show them light.

The standing committee of the Janata Party met on March 30 and tentatively agreed to make sifting enquiries in the affairs of Jammu and Kashmir on the spot before taking a final decision. Two eminent leaders Asoka Mehta and Nanaji Deshmukh, were asked to visit the State and study the latest situation there consequent on the Governor having taken over the State

administration. Later another leader, Bhanu Pratap Singh, was also associated with them. The three-member delegation was to examine the possibility of setting up a Janata unit in the State well in advance of the, then, forthcoming Assembly elections.

Rising Forces of Democracy

THE withdrawal of Emergency in India and preparations for holding free elections to the Lok Sabha in February had generated a Janata wave in the country which had swept furiously over the North. It had crossed the borders between the Punjab and Kashmir states and taken over Jammu in its stride. A Janata unit was set up in February in the city to fight the Parliamentary election. But when the central election committee of the Party chose Sheikh Abdur Rehman, an erstwhile Jan Sanghi but now a BLD worker, as its candidate for Jammu-Rajouri constituency a fierce controversy ensued. Extremist Jan Sanghis in the unit opposed it and the steering committee put up a rebel, Thakore Baldev Singh, as its candidate. The central Janata Party leaders asked Thakore to withdraw from the field but he refused to do so. The Jammu unit of Janata Party was therefore disbanded on March 4, as having proved insubordinate. The two Janata candidates in the State—Sheikh Abdur Rehman from Jammu and Om Prakash Saraf from Udhampur—were asked to set up constituency-level committees of their own for election work. Both the candidates were unsuccessful at the polls, Baldev Singh emerging victorious defeating Abdur Rehman.

The people of the Valley who are overwhelmingly Muslim do not look kindly at any outside political party. Though the

Congress Party claimed to have won majority of seats in the State legislature in 1972 elections, the Kashmiris were not emotionally involved in the fight; the elections were like the previous ones held after independence, totally rigged. When, however, with the dissolution of the Assembly the Valley was gripped by anti-Abdullah wave it was mistaken for Janata wave because the aims of both were similar: abolition of totalitarianism, corruption, nepotism as also establishment of democratic norms and principles in political life. Janata wave never crossed Pir Panjal range dividing Jammu from the Valley but due to the proximity of the two waves the one was mistaken for the other which caused much misunderstanding and many miscalculations.

Swayed by the unprecedented opposition to the National Conference and its leaders by the Valley Muslims, a number of political workers thought of forming a Janata unit in Srinagar; they were led by a veteran of the freedom fight, Ghulam Mohiuddin Karra. On April 4, a crowd of 7000 people turned up at the historic Lal Chowk to hear Karra when he launched the unit. In his speech Karra made a blistering attack on the policies of Abdullah saying that he had only succeeded in giving the State a "corrupt, inefficient and ruthless administration". Karra said it was largely in response to the wishes of the people that he had decided to re-enter into politics and start the Janata unit in Kashmir. The staff correspondent of the *Times of India* reported that the meeting was notable because for the first time in many years slogans were raised in Srinagar praising national leaders like Jayaprakash Narayan, Morarji Desai and A.B. Vajpayee.

The formation of the unit was, however, not authorized by the central leadership of the Janata Party. Therefore Karra, accompanied by some of his lieutenants, left for New Delhi to have consultations with and seek advice from Janata leaders regarding further steps he proposed to take in this direction. In New Delhi he met important leaders of the Party including Prime Minister Morarji Desai, Home Minister Charan Singh and Asoka Mehta who advised him to await the report of the three-member delegation nominated by the Party to go into the Kashmir affairs. Karra proceeded to Bombay and met Jayaprakash Narayan on April 10, in Jaslok Hospital. In reply

to a letter from Karra describing his aims, plans and endeavours to form a Janata Party unit in the State, Narayan said: "Kashmir so far has tended to maintain some kind of separate-ness from India and its politics has been more or less not in line with the main political developments in the country. Now I find you are active in forming the Janata Party in Jammu and Kashmir". Jayaprakash expressed the hope that "the Janata Party would bridge the political gulf between Kashmir and the rest of India".

Karra met me several times in New Delhi and persuaded me to assist the rising democratic forces in the Valley to rally round the Janata Party which were determined to fight National Conference fascism and dictatorial tendencies of Abdullah. I was willing to do so. On April 15, in the afternoon, we left for Srinagar together.

At Srinagar airport a big crowd awaited us and a number of Press reporters had come to hear us. I made a brief personal statement at the Press conference in which I said that in the past thirty years there was not a single election when Kashmir people were afforded opportunity to assert their will and choose genuine representatives to voice their feelings, urges and aspirations in the State legislature. "The recent upheaval in India has kindled the hope that the State people may also be able to have an impartial, free and fair election this time. To achieve this laudable aim, scattered democratic forces want to make a common cause and unite. I would be happy to extend a helping hand to them". I made it very clear that "I do not belong to any political party nor do I intend to contest as a candidate in the elections. This is a basic principle of the political philosophy in which I believe. Therefore, without personally joining the battle of the ballot I shall lend all my energy to see that in the forthcoming elections democracy emerges triumphant defeating the evil forces of highhandedness, hooliganism and despotism".

The principal speaker at the Press conference, G. M. D. Karra, gave a report of his talks with the Janata leaders in New Delhi and observed that he had found identity of views in assessment of the situation in the State. "I am satisfied with these talks", he declared. In a statement referring obviously to the National Conference and its leaders, Karra warned that

“those elements who had so far provided authoritarian and corrupt rule in the State were now trying to stage a come back by resorting to violence and vandalism and by raising narrow, sectarian and communal issues”. He felt sure that the vigilant people of Kashmir would give a befitting rebuff to those elements in the elections. He demanded release of all political prisoners. Karra entertained little doubts about establishment of Janata unit in Kashmir.¹

After Karra's return, from New Delhi organizational work of the Janata Party started in right earnest and was not confined to Srinagar but spread to all parts of the Valley. Congress and National Conference workers dissatisfied for one reason or another with the working of their own parties, besides thousands of politically-conscious men and women belonging to other parties began to swarm into the Janata unit formed by Karra. Admittedly the common ground for the innumerable entrants was their deep hatred of the immoral, anti-people and anti-democratic behaviour of National Conference and Congress rulers since independence and in particular the despotic methods of Abdullah and his colleagues in handling the administration during the period of two years (1975-1977). The numerous victims of the atrocities were a conspicuous lot among the enthusiastic recruits of the Janata forces who made the unit popular creating the impression that Janata was on the top in body politic of the State.

Some days earlier, on April 10, Mirwaiz Mohammad Farooq, chairman of the Awami Action Committee and the religious head of a substantial section of the Muslims, had offered his services in the cause of democracy. He would, he said, “actively campaign to prevent the return of authoritarian rule in Jammu and Kashmir”. He indicated that “he would not raise the issue of the right of self-determination on which he had harped often in the past”. The immediate issue, he acknowledged, is the right to live as human beings. “The larger issues regarding India and Pakistan can wait”, he emphatically declared. He hoped the Janata Government would ensure that the right of free election would be available to Kashmiris. He envisaged

¹*Indian Express*, April 16, 1977.

the emergence of a united front of all forces opposed to Abdullah in the coming poll. He revealed there had been contacts between himself and leaders of various groups in this connection and he was confident that the front would take shape very soon.¹

However, Janata leadership was in search of a personality of outstanding ability, high moral character, commanding public respect and trust and deserving confidence who could organize the State unit and lead it to victory at the hustings. Maulana Mohammad Sayed Masoodi an old-timer who had been a shining luminary of the freedom struggle from its early days in the thirties and had done friendly turns after 1947 in keeping Kashmir within India, particularly in the turbulent days of disappearance of the sacred relic from Durgah Hazaratbal, was the choice. He had practically retired from active politics after the fiasco in which States People's Convention ended and was loath to come out of the seclusion in which he lived at Ganderbal like a darvesh. For having remained aloof from sharing power which he could easily have done, and for having resisted the human weaknesses of avarice, greed and amassing wealth and possessing property, he had earned applause and public confidence. Though not charismatic like Abdullah he had risen high in moral stature. The Janata leadership, therefore, considered him an asset for the Party if he could be prevailed upon to be the convener and guide of the Kashmir unit.

Even before the Asoka Mehta Committee came to Srinagar, two central ministers, George Fernandes and A.B. Vajpayee, arrived with the delegation of the Non-aligned Countries Coordination Bureau. Both of them, admirers of Masoodi, motored down to Gandarbal to have preliminary talks with him on his assuming the leadership of Kashmir Janata unit. No definite conclusions were drawn because the Maulana expressed unwillingness to come out of the self-imposed retirement.

The three-member Mehta Committee visited the State from April 15 to 18 to make an assessment of the situation by meeting politicians and others of all shades of opinion in different parts of Jammu and Kashmir. The first task of the

¹*Indian Express*, April 11, 1977.

committee after arrival in Srinagar on the 16th was to drive straight from airport to Ganderbal about 30 kms. away to call on the Maulana. The *Times of India* correspondent reported: "Apparently the Janata Party leaders felt that if their unit in Kashmir is to command respect, it should be headed by a leader of Maulana Masoodi's stature".¹ The committee jointly and its members severally met the Maulana to withstand his reluctance and prepare him to take up the onerous job; in this they had achieved success before they left for New Delhi on the 18th. What passed between the delegation and the emaciated 74-year scholar-politician is not known but it was believed that he had been given strong assurances of fullest cooperation and support on behalf of the central party in fulfilling the responsibility of the grave charge. The delegation met with, and consulted over 2000 persons—politicians, journalists, officials, doctors, traders, lawyers, teachers, young men, and students—representatives of all sections and classes. They had talks with the Governor and his adviser. The National Conference leaders also called on the delegation; Sheikh Abdullah, besides having a tea session with the members of the delegation, had an exchange of letters with Asoka Mehta explaining their respective positions. The delegation made up their mind that Kashmir Janata unit was a must.

In the Press Conference which Asoka Mehta addressed before departure, he made meaningful observations of deep interest which touched some essential features of the Kashmir problem and gave indications that after thirty years Indian leaders had begun to see the light. Asked whether the Janata Party would be able to strike roots in Jammu and Kashmir as politics in the State was largely personality-dominated, Asoka Mehta retorted that "personalities dominated because democratic aspirations of the people were seldom given free play. The Janata Party was coming up in response to the democratic urges of the people and had every reason to succeed". Mehta pointed out that the State people should feel a sense of participation as keen as people in other parts of the country so that the 'tattered garments' of pessimism, frustration and

¹*Times of India*, April 16, 1977.

cynicism were discarded by them. "A new future is beckoning the people of Jammu and Kashmir", he remarked. The committee had met even people who had nothing to do with politics but had much to say about the hardships suffered by the common men and women in the State. "I don't think that ever before any attempt had been made to get so close to the people", Mehta admitted. "It appeared, from representations made to the committee that the people of the State had not been able to breathe freely in the past and they had been passing through a dark tunnel without any sight of light. The people had many grievances against administration; little had been done to solve their problems". Concluding Mehta assured: "In future no attempt will be made to foist leaders on the people from New Delhi. Every attempt would be made to draw the people in the national mainstream".¹

No wonder that Abdullah and his colleagues saw no compatibility between the new concept of Kashmir politics in the eyes of the Indian leaders as spelt out by Mehta and the aims of the National Conference drawn from the authoritarian philosophy. Therefore they refused to merge the National Conference with the Janata Party making the formation of the State unit inevitable and unavoidable. Mehta disclosed in the news conference on April 18, that his committee had recommended the formation of 21-member ad hoc committee for the proposed Janata unit in the State.

After submitting the recommendations of his delegation and having consultations with central leadership which were punctuated with differences, some basic others trivial, Asoka Mehta announced the formation of the ad hoc committee on April 26. He said: "The national committee of the Janata Party has decided to organize a unit of the Janata Party in Jammu and Kashmir. The personnel of the organizing committee will be announced tomorrow. The convener of the committee will be Maulana Mohammad Sayed Masoodi who has agreed to lead the party in the State". Next day, the list of all members of the ad hoc committee was released in New Delhi. It contained, besides Masoodi, A.G. Goni, A.G. Lone, Dr. Abdul Majid,

¹*Times of India*, April 19, 1977.

Prem Nath Bazaz, G.N. Untoo, Baldev Singh M.P., Danraj Balgotra, Shamim Ahmad Shamim, G.M.D. Karra, Mohammad Shaffi, Chaman Lal Gupta, Harish Malhotra, Maulvi Iftikhar Hussain, Om Prakash Saraf, Sant Singh Teg, Chaudhri Abdur Rehman and Sonam Gyalsan.

The ad hoc committee was created under peculiar circumstances. Like other political bodies it did not come into existence with the consent of like-minded persons known to each other for a sufficient period of time. It was a conglomeration of individuals deeply influenced by the anti-Abdullah political weather, bent upon destroying the authoritarianism of National Conference. The common aim of the committee as described by frail and ascetic Masoodi at the outset was "to win the gratitude of the people of Kashmir if it ensured free and fair election in which they had never since 1947 been allowed to vote fearlessly in the State".¹ Soon, however, it became irritatingly clear that some members cherished different objectives and particular designs; they did not have a common philosophy nor the same outlook on life. There were, no doubt, some balanced, selfless, energetic and experienced men who could be an asset to any political party. But there were also those with ambitions to fulfil.

Exchange of hot words over disagreements consumed much of the committee's precious and by no means sufficient time to prepare for fight with an unscrupulous opponent. It was amazing that from Jammu both Sheikh Abdur Rehman, member central Janata Party, and Baldev Singh who as a rebel had defeated him at the Parliamentary polls, had been included. Their interminable bickerings remained a source of worry to the Ad Hoc Committee till the last. It was decided to appoint both of them as co-conveners for Jammu region but the device failed to bring them closer to each other.

I was surprised why and how my name appeared in the list of the members of the Ad Hoc Committee. I had made it abundantly known to the people of Kashmir that I did not belong to any political party nor had I any intention of doing so. Protesting against the inclusion of my name in the Ad Hoc

¹*Times of India*, April 27, 1977.

Committee I wrote to Asoka Mehta but agreed to stay as a member till the end of the elections only.¹

The first meeting of the committee was held on May 1 and the second on the 6th and 7th at Ganderbal when more members were added to the Ad Hoc Committee: G.R. Kochak, M.A. Nahvi from Kashmir and R.K. Kaushal, Ved Bhasin, T.R. Sharma and Shiv Ram Manmar (Harijan) from Jammu. Masoodi and Gyalsan were authorized to nominate five and two more members from the Kashmir Valley and Ladakh regions respectively.

Discussions among the members in these two meetings brought to the surface acute personal and ideological differences and disagreements among certain members and most of the time which should have been profitably spent was sheerly wasted in harangues and accusations and counter-accusations not of a creditable nature. When the rest of the time was devoted to the building of organization from scratch it was obvious that the task was formidable and participation in the elections which were proposed to be held next month downright foolhardiness if success was the aim. It was not easy to establish the new party from grassroots within the unbelievable short time of one month when not even the three regional committees were in existence. The Ad Hoc Committee had no cadre of workers on whom to depend for building the organization or fighting the elections. Most of the members of the Ad Hoc Committee were unacquainted with each other. Was it then sensible to have anything to do with assembly election, I enquired. Would it not be desirable and advisable to wait and take a decision when the preliminary conditions for doing so had been fulfilled?

After calm deliberations the committee arrived at the conclusion that under the circumstances the question of participation in the elections mostly depended on the assistance that the Central Janata Party would give and the promptness with which it would be able to do so. It was obvious that at least two of the parties in the field—the Congress and the National Conference—were decades old and, besides possessing required

¹See Appendix A.

experience, enjoyed vast resources in finance, men and material to allow the Janata Party, barely born a few days ago, to successfully contest them at the hustings. The task could be taken in hand only if the Central Janata Party realized its hugeness and was determined to help unstintedly and vigorously, and before it was too late.

No time was, therefore, lost in sending G.M.D. Karra to New Delhi to apprise the leadership of the weaknesses of the Ad Hoc Committee and seek the Central Party's maximum support to face the ordeal. He met Prime Minister Morarji Desai, Home Minister Charan Singh, Asoka Mehta, Nanaji Deshmukh and several others and presented them the real picture of State politics and gave a full report of the feelings of the Ad Hoc Committee. He was given a patient hearing and assured of all assistance which the committee needed to fight the election. Happy at the outcome of the talks, Karra said in New Delhi that "while the party was proving to be extremely popular in all the regions of the State and was attracting people from various walks of life, notably intellectuals and youth, the State leaders having formed a nucleus were keen to establish district, block and halqa committees to complete the organizational structure to meet the historic task of defeating anti-democratic forces at the polls". Karra did not exaggerate the potentiality of the Janata Unit. With the announcement of its formation practically all the older political bodies began to have shakings of more or less intensity; the Congress and National Conference felt greater tremors; four Kashmir youth groups—Kashmir Youth Action Committee, Students' Welfare Union, Kashmir Youth Organization and the Student Voters Forum—decided to join Janata Unit.¹ A well known group of intellectuals led by Mirza Ghulam Hassan Beg Arif, president of the Kashmir Council for Research, Ghulam Nabi Khayal, winner of the Sahitya Academy Award, Bansi Parimoo, winner of the Lalit Kala Akadami Award, Sayeed Tahir Hamadani, editor of *Sadai Kashmir* and S.S. Girgin, a historian from Ladakh, too, announced, in a Press conference that they supported Janata aims

¹*Indian Express*, April 28, 1977.

and ideals. The staff correspondent of the *Times of India* reported : "Numerically they do not matter much but keeping in view the fact that each commands respect in intellectual circles, they represent an impressive gain for the Janata Party".¹

On May 6, Mirwaiz Maulana Mohammad Farooq, Chairman of the Kashmir Awami Action Committee, announced in Srinagar that he and his party would extend full support to the Janata Party, and since the spokesman of the Ad Hoc Committee, "had sought my cooperation in strengthening the roots of democracy in Jammu and Kashmir, I have assured him that my party will extend the required cooperation in this regard". He pledged that "he would continue to struggle relentlessly against authoritarianism in the State".²

On May 11, the followers of the late Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, a former prime minister of the State, known as Bakshi group numbering a few thousand joined the Janata. Then came hordes of ex-army men who desired "to give a fillip to the movement for freedom from hoodlum rule which had plagued the State since 1947".

But the major support for the Janata unit came from the rank and file of both the Congress and National Conference organizations. When on April 28, Maulana Masoodi declared in a Press interview that Janata will keep its doors open to all including Sheikh Abdullah, people from all walks of life began to pour into the new body through its portals. Day in and day out, multitudes thronged its improvised office to join Janata hoping thereby to destroy the citadel of new despotism which had replaced Dogra Maharaja's autocracy in a more vicious form and for establishment of democratic norms and traditions in State politics. Working-class men, like motor drivers, boatmen, artisans and factory labourers vied with teachers, lawyers, doctors, writers and students to support the rising forces of democracy. When the office of Janata unit was opened in the spacious house called Forest Lodge, a government building secured on usual rent, a stream of eager enthusiastic and

¹*Times of India*, May 11, 1977.

²*Indian Express*, May 7, 1977.

earnest men crowded its rooms for talks with leaders on the growing revolutionary tide in the Valley.

Some desertions from the Congress and the National Conference were notable. Such, for instance, was the resignation of A.G. Goni, Speaker of the State Legislative Assembly, and many other members of both the houses of State Legislature too many to be mentioned by their names. Dr. Jagat Mohini of the Congress Women's Wing followed in their footsteps. Then came the turn of Peerzada Ali Shah, Vice President, Kashmir Province National Conference. The President of the Jammu Province National Conference, Balraj Puri, who had also been a member of the steering committee of the State People's Convention and close to Abdullah, came next. G.M. Bawan, Administrator, Srinagar Municipality, a liberal in outlook and a distinguished intellectual of the Kashmir Cultural Society, severed his relations with the National Conference. All of them along with their hundreds of active colleagues, relinquished their respective parties and were sooner or later absorbed by the Janata.

Janata Voices Aspirations of State People

IT needs to be stressed that the Kashmiris, particularly the Muslim population of the Valley and the adjoining areas, were not attracted by the Janata Party or the ideals and past record of even one of the five constituent units of the Party. No one among the leaders of the units had for long years after independence, shown any sympathy with the State people when the Central Congress Government, under Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi, allowed the local tyrants to repress and oppress the Kashmiris. No voice of protest was raised when thousands in the Valley languished behind prison bars for mere expression of independent views or when hundreds were mown down by police firing. If anything, the Janata politicians were critical of the Congress Government for being too liberal towards Kashmiris especially those who displayed any tendency to rebel against authoritarian rule and suppression of civil liberties and fundamental rights; the supporters of the right of self-determination and those who demanded holding of plebiscite to decide accession issue were the main target of attack by Janata leaders. The Jan Sangh, which is the main-stay and bulwork of Janata in northern India, was disliked by the Kashmiris for its anti-Muslim attitude and communal outlook

which at any rate it had maintained since its birth till the formation of the Janata Party.

But having successfully fought the dictatorship of the Congress and exposed the atrocities perpetrated by its minions on innocent people during the Emergency, Janata Party emerged as the saviour of Indian democracy and inspired the Kashmiris to similarly rise against the highhandedness, corruption, nepotism and despotic rule in the State. In rallying round the Janata banner the Kashmiris were giving vent to anti-Abdullah feelings as well as expression to their democratic aspirations and urges. Their enthusiasm stemmed from the hope that by fighting under Janata flag they would be able to destroy the evils which had plagued them during the past three decades; personal rule would be ended, clean and incorruptible administration established, human values restored, justice done to humbler folks and, above all, free and fair elections held to lay democratic norms and traditions in public life.

There is no denying that the partition of the subcontinent on religious grounds had alienated the Kashmiris from India and strengthened their pro-Pakistan proclivities. It is foolish, even hazardous, to underrate these tendencies of the State Muslims. As a matter of fact, Abdullah and his supporters have been horse trading in political field on these tendencies. Whatever the reasons that led the Sheikh to wholeheartedly support State's accession to India in 1947, whether it was the fear of Jinnah's vindictive nature, regard for secularism, or sympathy with non-Muslim minorities as he professes, subsequently, he found it a lucrative profession to be a secularist if India recognized him the sole leader entitled to rule the State and to arouse dormant anti-India passions and pro-Pakistan emotions if denied that position. In the Valley, Sheikh held India to ransom. Unfortunately the Congress leadership dared not call the bluff once and for all, with the result that the State people had to suffer innumerable hardships and stay continuously deprived of fundamental rights guaranteed by the Indian Constitution.

Since the State has a predominant Muslim population, it enjoyed a peculiar position within the Indian Union in which other states are populated by majority of Hindus. The founding

fathers of Indian democracy, as we saw, had, therefore, after a good deal of deliberation, guaranteed, while framing the Constitution, the full autonomy of the State by adopting Article 370 to the satisfaction of the Kashmiris. It was a feat of farsighted statesmanship highly appreciated by liberal politicians. It was no doubt a temporary provision for the transition period during which misgivings, apprehensions and fears caused by post-partition communal halocausts were expected to be allayed.

Unfortunately, instead of utilizing the Article 370 to fulfil the purpose for which it was inserted in the Constitution, self-seeking Muslim leaders of the State taking ill advantage of the constitutional provision, struck deals with the Congress Government at the centre for fulfilment of personal ambitions to the detriment of Kashmir democracy.

"Although a part of India," lamented the Jammu and Kashmir Janata Party manifesto, "Kashmir was deprived from reaping the harvest of freedom. Congress rulers never took the State people into their confidence and imposed tyrants and despots on them. They deliberately nourished public men who were ready to repress and oppress Kashmiris. The local stooges who were foisted from above incessantly tried to keep their Congress masters in New Delhi in good humour. They were never responsible to the people of the State. It resulted in a total denial of democratic rights of the latter. The hired agents were, however, allowed to amass wealth and vast properties by loot, misappropriation, fraud and cheating. They were also afforded fullest opportunity to rule by terror and suppression of the voice of dissent".

The manifesto added :

"The State was thus transformed into a vast prison-house where anybody could be put behind the bars and kept in detention for years without supplying him grounds for it. Any stout-hearted freedom fighter who faced the troubles heroically would be involved in fabricated cases by the mercenary rulers and misunderstandings would be created between him and the Central Government".

Elaborating the *modus operandi* of the local tyrants the manifesto said :

"It became a fashion with the rulers to wax eloquent about

the secular traditions and temperament of Kashmiris but, in the same breath, they would dub every self respecting Muslim as Pakistani agent and every Hindu patriot as RSS enthusiast. The Kashmiri nabobs resorted to blackmailing the central leaders to achieve their personal ends and would raise, at times, the slogans of plebiscite and right of self-determination if the central leadership slightly tried to resist the fulfilment of their extravagant ambitions. The unprincipled self-seekers had only one purpose in mind : to amass wealth, whether coming from indigenous sources or from foreign countries. When events forced them to be friendly with India, they brazenfacedly turned somersaults and signed pacts neutralising the effect of their own slogans but felt no qualms of conscience in doing so".

The manifesto bemoaned :

"The people of the State have never been given an opportunity to exercise franchise freely and fearlessly. Right from the day of independence to March 1977, the story of so-called elections in the State is a slanderous record. It appears incredible but is a fact that the last time when the State people exercised their votes in any measure of freedom was under the autocratic rule of the Maharaja. The Parliamentary elections in last March amply demonstrated the hollowness of the claims of those leaders who were never tired of crying for the right of self-determination of State people".

Alluding to the rise of liberating forces in India, the manifesto said:

"The great Janata revolution provided a ray of hope for our people. They have begun to believe that they also can emerge from the long dark night of despotism and misrule imposed on them for the last three decades".

The manifesto concluded :

"The Party has the privilege of being led by eminent stalwarts of the freedom struggle. Under Maulana Masoodi's leadership the Party pledges to establish democracy in the State, usher in an era of plenty and prosperity and rid this benighted land of wickedness and atrocities of mercenaries who have been exposed by their own heinous crimes and atrocious deeds".

In a 46-item plan the Kashmir Janata Party enumerated its

political, economic, social and cultural programme which it pledged to implement if brought to power in a free and fair election. The manifesto reflected the new thinking and the new approach to life totally different from that which had swayed politics since 1947.

Regrettable as it was, the Union Government encouraged Abdullah in holding an exaggerated opinion of his own importance; his ego was inflated. He posed to be the supreme leader of the State and, on that ground, claimed monopoly of political power. Over the years there had grown what came to be called Abdullah-style in State politics. He was a communalist, secularist, nationalist and socialist at the same time. To the Kashmiri Muslims he preached rank communalism from pulpits of mosques and shrines as a religious leader devoted to the cause of Islam. Outside the Valley he was at pains to present himself as an Indian nationalist, a secularist, an admirer of Jawaharlal Nehru and a devotee of Mahatama Gandhi. In essence he was neither one nor the other but a confused man interested only in capture of power. His political ideology was trimmed as suited to the occasion from time to time.

A salient feature of Abdullah's game was to lend unequivocal and unswerving support to the State's accession to India as long as the Union Government was willing to hand over the State administration to him even against the manifest will of the Kashmiris. When, and if, the Union Government, in response to the growing anti-Abdullah sentiment within the State, expressed reluctance to abide by the wishes of the Sheikh, he readily and unabashedly turned a somersault and did not hesitate to arouse base passions and religious hatred of fanatic elements among the Muslims to blackmail the Central Government. Demand for plebiscite, even after having signed the Indian Constitution and accepted, finally and irrevocably, the State's accession to India carried no greater significance than a part of this mischievous game. Amazingly, the bluff and bluster proved eminently successful to hoodwink the Indian public for many years; but the great change which took place with the fall of the Congress rule and the epoch-making success of Janata Party in the Parliamentary elections in March 1977, tremendously

influenced public opinion in Jammu and Kashmir and enthused lovers of democracy in the State.

In post-independence Kashmir, a new generation has arisen which is more educated, more politically-conscious and self-assertive; it is in search of human and democratic rights denied to the people for three decades. Old slogans and shibboleths which the previous generation loved to raise have become meaningless. The developments which took place in Pakistan in the seventies stimulated fresh thinking among the intelligent and politically-mature sections of the Muslims. In 1971, Pakistan had witnessed an internal upheaval when its eastern wing dissociated itself from its western wing to form what came to be known as Bangladesh. Now in 1977, the truncated Pakistan is in the throes of a new struggle in which democratic forces are fighting with their backs to the wall; the outcome is anybody's guess. In these circumstances, pro-Pakistan slogans in Kashmir have lost much of their charm and weight.

Depressed by cataclysmic changes in Pakistan but heartened by the success of democratic elements in the battle of the ballot in India, the Kashmiris saw a ray of hope in the latter which blazed the path to the goal of their own emancipation from one-man rule and establishment of a democratic system in the State.

The educated Muslim youth whose number multiplied several times since independence realized by 1977 that Abdullah's inconsistent behaviour had thwarted the progress of the State people in every sphere of social life; it had blocked their advancement and deprived them of several political and human rights enjoyed by all other Indians. While free elections were common in all other states, Jammu and Kashmir alone suffered from gerrymandering and rigging every time elections to Parliament or State Assembly were held simply because the Kashmiris, misguided by N. C. leadership, were not trusted to be loyal or reliable.

A new thinking had set in; educated youth and students had become restive; old arguments no longer appealed to them; they were bent upon ending stagnation caused by Abdullah's barren policy and would like to have all that they were entitled to get as human beings and by law. The main objective which

they set before themselves was establishment of democratic norms, traditions and institutions in the State. To them the coming elections became a contest between dictatorship, nepotism and corruption of a coterie on one side and people's freedom on the other. The rise of Janata Party thus opened a new horizon for both the restless and thoughtful intellectuals as well as teeming, toiling and poverty-stricken millions in the State; they wanted to achieve an honourable place within the Indian Union. A new dynamic Kashmir was on the march; it was pulsating with life and resolved to make itself felt. Kashmiris would no longer be prevented from going ahead towards the goal of democracy. A free and fair election to the State Legislative Assembly (as distinct from manipulated elections held by despotic National Conference and Congress rulers since independence) was considered to be the first step towards this sublime goal. No sacrifice would be spared by patriotic Kashmiris to achieve the objective; all energy was bent to secure human and democratic rights for downtrodden millions virtually disinherited by the National Conference usurpers.

8

False Issues Raised

THE rising wave of opposition unnerved the leaders of the National Conference; it was a novel, depressing and perturbing experience for them to see hordes of men and women joining Janata and making hostile demonstrations against the party which had commanded popularity during the entire period of freedom struggle and enjoyed power after achievement of independence; the political weather had undergone a terrific change.

Since it came into existence, National Conference had been patronized by the Congress. When independence was achieved in 1947, and the Congress became the ruling party in India; it arbitrarily recognized the National Conference as the genuine representative body of the State people and Abdullah as their supreme leader. Any opposition to or dissent from this view was suppressed with heavy hand. It was an accepted and unchallengeable policy that National Conference alone had the right to rule the State; all other political bodies were enemies of democracy. The evils such a faulty approach produced were deliberately overlooked or minimized. In national and international forums Abdullah was given prominence far greater than he deserved or facts warranted. Accustomed to pampering by Nehru for years and Indira since 1975, the Sheikh had taken it for granted that Janata, the successor ruling party at New

Delhi, too would continue the same or similar policy towards Kashmir. But he failed to convince Janata leadership that it would be fair to State people. Most of the Janata high-ups did not trust him though some still entertained lingering doubts whether handling of the Kashmir issue without Abdullah's assistance could be successful. However, when all was said and done on both sides, Janata leaders told Abdullah that he must come down to earth from dizzy heights where from he talked, to expect the ruling party's patronage. He was advised to disband the National Conference and take steps to join the mainstream of political life. This, as we know, would have upset Sheikh's apple cart and foiled his game of keeping aloof the State as his private preserve and left no opportunity for him to use by turns the National Conference as pro- and anti-India force as suited his book.

Relying on his old tactics utilized to deal with the Congress, the Sheikh brought pressure to bear on Janata leadership through those who still believed in his sincerity and honesty, to accept his offer of alliance and on May 7 proceeded towards New Delhi to have a final talk with the Janata leaders. But his journey was cut short at Jammu when on May 8, Nanaji Deshmukh, an influential figure in the Janata party, made a firm declaration that any alliance between Janata Party and National Conference was not possible.

Loss of support from the central ruling party was decidedly a great blow to the National Conference which set its leaders thinking about their participation in the Assembly elections. Till now it had been a walkover for the favourite party—be it National Conference or Congress—everytime elections were held in the State; all irregularities, highhandedness and anti-people activities were condoned, however resentful the Kashmiris might have felt. It was realized by the Sheikh and his colleagues that this time it would be different. At the most, National Conference could expect equal treatment with other parties in the State. But most of the Sheikh's supporters apprehended that Central Janata Government would show same partiality towards Kashmir Janata Unit as the Conference used to receive from the Congress in the past. Had Abdullah and his party enjoyed the support of the Kashmiris, the holding of free and fair

elections should have been welcomed and not looked upon as an impending catastrophe. But the fast changing political climate in the State had brought home to them that they could entertain little hope of success at the polls.

Although both the National Conference candidates, Begum Akbar Jan, and Abdul Ahad Vakil had won in the Parliamentary elections of March on the National Conference tickets against opposition candidates in the Valley yet it was galling to the Sheikh that an unknown Maulvi Iftikhar Hussain who opposed the Begum polled no fewer than 80,000 votes; the contest was a blade of grass which showed the way the wind blew. If thousands of voters were bold enough to face him at the hustings when he headed the State administration what might not happen after he was ousted from power. It posed a question of to be or not to be which had to be answered.

Putting a bold face on the situation and in his characteristically arrogant manner Abdullah had on March 2 in a hard-hitting speech admonished an audience in Srinagar :

“For the first time in my 45 years of public life someone has questioned my integrity. It is a matter of shame for the people of Kashmir that the man who had fearlessly led them through thick and thin, who had suffered imprisonment for them and who had made many other sacrifices should be attacked”.¹

In another speech he asked the Kashmiris how did they allow opposition candidates to stand for election against those chosen by him.

The Sheikh had in these words administered a warning to all those politicians who were thinking of participation in the battle of the ballot against the National Conference. This was in mid-April when anti-Abdullah wave had yet to gather momentum. As the enthusiasm for change and support for democracy and opposition to totalitarianism assumed greater proportions dismay spread in the National Conference ranks. For once by the end of April Abdullah was encountering real and formidable opposition; his leadership was at stake. Not having known, much less practiced, the art of persuasion, argument and discussion with co-workers or friendly contacts with the people

¹*Times India*, March 3, 1977.

at large, he was at his wit's end what to do and what steps to take to mollify opposition or enlist an increasing number of supporters and sympathizers to win at the polls.

The greater the number of those including well-known personalities who left the National Conference fold to join Janata the intenser the gloom which enveloped Mujahid Manzil, the head quarters of the party.

The apprehension that like Congress Government in the past which freely allowed rigging of elections by their local henchmen, the Janata ruling party will also manipulate the show in favour of the newly-created State Janata unit, particularly worried Abdullah and made his colleagues pessimistic. He could not believe that the Janata Party would be fair and remain neutral. At the end, he would think differently but he may not be blamed, if, in May, he harboured unfounded and imaginary fears about it because he had not known the Central Government guided by any high political morality for over thirty years.

In Srinagar, leaders of National Conference held innumerable meetings among themselves at every level in order to frame a policy, take a decision and chalk out a programme for the Assembly elections. Sheikh Abdullah met hundreds of his loyal colleagues and workers from all parts of the State to know their views. It was believed on all hands that the popularity of the National Conference had waned and it was not possible to capture majority of seats in the Assembly. Was it then worthwhile to contest and let the party claim be exposed as hollow? Since formidable odds were opposed to the party even in the Valley and the central ruling party was unfriendly, the question of boycotting the polls was seriously considered. But a section of devoted workers were of the opinion that in any case the party can secure between 30 and 35 seats which might subsequently swell to majority of 39 by taking advantage of defections in other groups. It was worth trying. Being a crucial election in the political history of the State the National Conference could not afford to boycott it. Whatever the difficulties to face the party could not overlook or even underestimate its importance. The party had to take the historic decision: to be or not to be, concluded the caucus. "Though we may not rule out other means for adoption which developing circumstances force on us,

for the present it is inadvisable to leave the field at this early stage," M.A. Beg was reported to have clenched the issue with which Sheikh Abdullah eventually agreed.

It was a trying and testing time for the National Conference leaders. For the first time in the history of the party they were encountering tough opposition and their usual tactics of dealing with the situation had proved of no avail. It was not difficult for them to foresee that, left to themselves, the Kashmiris would, profiting by their past experience and guided by triumphant antitotalitarian forces in India, defeat the National Conference at the polls. There was, however, one possibility which might still save the situation: raising of false communal and religious issues which would excite the Muslims against Janata and stem the rising tide of Kashmir democracy. Abdullah had done this before and succeeded in securing his aim of regaining lost popularity and retaining or recapturing power. He could do so again on a far bigger scale, at any rate he could make another attempt and put the weapon to trial.

No doubt it would be a risky move and apt to demolish his credibility among the Indians and damage his secularist image which both he had been careful to preserve. It would also deprive him of non-Muslim votes in Jammu and Kashmir at the hustings. But his advisers believed that it was not a prohibitive price he would be called upon to pay if the party had to take a chance to capture power; secondly, the Sheikh was conscious that the Indians, despite their professions to the contrary, held him in esteem not for cherishing noble ideals but because he had a name among the State Muslims which had served India to offset the effects of anti-India tirades of Pakistan. If by raising false issues and hoodwinking the Kashmiris he could succeed in realizing the immediate objective, the future would take care of itself, Abdullah argued.

Having lost all hope of alliance with Janata Party and convinced that Kashmir Janata unit had not only come to stay but was also drawing crowds of Kashmiris into its fold, Abdullah started firing salvos on the opposition. Addressing a public meeting on May 15 at Anantnag he warned the audience that the Janata Party wants to abrogate Article 370 of the Indian Constitution and reduce Kashmir to the level of other states in

the country. Dwelling at length on the circumstances in which the State acceded to India in 1947, he said that the decision was taken in view of the interests of the non-Muslim population. "After accession to India, Muslims were full of apprehension that they would lose their identity in the national mainstream. It was against this background that assurances were sought and received from India under Article 370 that the internal autonomy of the State would be maintained at all costs".¹

Apart from the false statement that the accession was accepted by National Conference party to favour non-Muslims, as explained earlier, no declaration from any responsible Janata leader of All-India stature or any member of the State Janata unit had been made to the effect that the Article 370 would be or should be repealed. Indeed, one after the other Prime Minister Morarji Desai, External Affairs Minister A.B. Vajpayee, Home Minister Charan Singh and Asoka Mehta had already emphatically and publicly stated that there was no intention or move to unilaterally alter, amend or abrogate Article 370 until the State people themselves wanted to do so as was provided in the Constitution itself. Prime Minister Desai had reiterated publicly: "The special status of Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370 would be maintained as long as the people of the State wanted it". The Ad Hoc Committee of Kashmir Janata Party had welcomed the statements of the central leaders and endorsed them. A Janata member in the Lok Sabha, Subramaniam Swamy, had no doubt demanded that the Article be revoked but he had no responsible position in the Government. Mischievously alluding, time and again, to Swamy's demand as also to the ambiguous wording of the letter from Jayaprakash Narayan to Karra, Sheikh Abdullah went on making the charge till the last day of the elections that the Janata Party was determined to remove Article 370 from the Constitution.

Ironically, Sheikh Abdullah had in his negotiations with the Central Congress Government beginning with an agreement in 1952 and ending with the Kashmir Accord in 1975, rendered the Article 370 ineffective in some respects while most of the Kashmir leaders now in the Janata Party had been registering

¹*Times of India* May 17, 1977.

protests against whittling down the effectiveness of the Article. It was, therefore, audacious that the man who had bartered the rights of State people and surrendered parts of Kashmir autonomy just to obtain crumbs of power should raise the cry that Janata Party was the culprit bent upon sellout of the State.

Abdullah, however, knew which issue deeply stirred the Kashmiris and how to exploit it to his advantage. In the past, whenever he had become unpopular he had aroused misgivings and fears in the minds of the Muslims and presented himself as the one who could protect them against onslaughts from outside. Once again he was using the same weapon. He did not only pledged himself and his party to preserve the Article 370 but even went further to warn the Union Government, on May 23, albeit in a garbled way, that if he fails to achieve his objective the Kashmiris would not hesitate to secede from the Indian Union. The correspondent of *Hindustan Times* reported that "Sheikh Abdullah has threatened to reconsider accession in case a place of honour and dignity is denied to the State within the Indian Union". The correspondent said that the statement provoked little reaction locally and it was generally dismissed as an election gimmick by political circles¹. Nevertheless, it did not go unnoticed.

Apprehending that his remarks and observations might be considered unlawful, objectionable and anti-national, Abdullah addressed a long letter, on May 30, to Chandra Shekhar, President, Janata Party, explaining away his fulminations. The Sheikh stated that though immediately after assuming office, External Affairs Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee had stated that Article 370 would not be altered without consulting the people of Kashmir, Mr. Subramaniam Swamy, M.P. had asked for its abrogation. The Sheikh also pointed out that the contents of the letter written by Jayaprakash Narayan to Mr. Gulam Mohiuddin Karra in which he had stated that Kashmir had tended to maintain some kind of separation from main political developments in the country and had hoped that newly formed Janata Party would close this political gulf, had caused misgivings. In an exchange of letters Chandra Shekhar assured

¹*Hindustan Times*, June 1, 1977.

Abdullah that there was no intention to take away the autonomy granted to the State. The Sheikh expressed his happiness over the clarification given by Chandra Shekhar on the status of Kashmir¹.

This should have ended the controversy over the Article 370 but as subsequent developments proved the letter was meant only to put off the Indian Government from taking any legal measures against the objectionable remarks of Abdullah. When he was convinced that the dreaded proceedings had been warded off, he revived his attack on the Kashmir Janata unit for its imaginary plan to get the Article abrogated. Indeed, Sheikh's lieutenant Afzal Beg raised the slogan that the election should be taken as plebiscite thus vaguely reminding the Kashmiris that the accession issue was yet to be decided. The more the emphasis was laid by the National Conference leaders on the retention of Article 370 and the significance of election as a plebiscite the more intense became the anti-India passion of the Kashmir Muslims and their hatred of the Janata Party. Of course, both Sheikh and Beg knew that the two issues were false and there neither was any occasion for amending, much less abrogating, Article 370 nor for holding of a plebiscite to reopen the question of accession. But they knew that the desire of joining Pakistan lingered on in many hearts or at any rate it was dormant in Muslim mind; therefore, raising of the issue however indirectly, could be exploited effectively against all those patriotic, honest, sincere and democratic elements who wanted Kashmir to have its rightful place in the Indian Union. Kashmir Janata Party was in a disadvantageous position in this respect because it could not compete on the communal and religious plane and could therefore be easily put in a dismal light by the National Conference.

Arousing religious passions and communal prejudices did not rest with the raising of two slogans. The National Conference leadership sought a more potent weapon to fight the Janata opposition. It was well known that Sheikh Abdullah had signed the Indian Constitution in 1950 in which Jammu and Kashmir State was accepted as a constituent part of the Indian Union.

¹*Hindustan Times*, June 1, 1977.

He had boastfully acknowledged being one of the authors of the Constitution. It was, therefore, difficult to carry conviction with the people that Janata Party was the villain to thrust accession on the State or even to smother its autonomy. The people knew that the boot was on the other leg. So there was need to take a more drastic step to defeat the Janata; it would be no other than direct exploitation of religious sentiments of the Muslims in the State.

Abandoning the pose of a secularist and an admirer of the Janata Party and its revolutionary role in having uprooted Congress dictatorship, Abdullah unabashedly turned another somersault and started fiercely attacking the Janata leadership for its rabid communalism. He accused Janata of being, in essence, the anti-Muslim Jan Sangh. At the Anantnag meeting referred to earlier he went to the extent of saying that the hands of Jan Sangh leaders were still drenched with Muslim blood. So it would be suicidal for the State Muslims to vote Janata to power. He admonished, pleaded, warned and rebuked the Muslims for their newly acquired affection for Jan Sangh which appeared in the grab of Janata.

Aware of the backwardness, ignorance and easily excitable religious emotion of the Muslims, Abdullah conveniently forgot how much praise he had lavished over Janata Party and its leaders for a whole month till May 8, his entreaties and pleadings at New Delhi and Bombay that he be accepted as one of them and his National Conference as an ally and the offer of Begum Akbar Jan and Abdul Ahad Vakil to support Janata Party in Lok Sabha. Now the Janata was presented in private talks and public speeches as a body of blood-thirsty politicians aiming at destruction of the Muslims and therefore in no way entitled to the vote of the Kashmiris. The argument proved a telling one and was used increasingly, extensively and forcefully.

Small and big leaders of the National Conference fanned out in the Valley and adjoining areas of the Jammu region such as Doda and Rajouri districts where Muslims are in majority, going from door to door with the Koran in hand asking every Muslim to swear by the holy book that he or she will cast vote for the God-fearing National Conference and not for the Janata infidel.

Hooliganism and Feigned Illness

THE election contest immediately assumed the shape of a Hindu-Muslim dispute. Unmindful of the pernicious consequences, Abdullah intensified the religious propaganda because he could not fail to see that the tide had begun to turn and the hypnotized and oath-bound Muslims were ready to forgive his sins of omission and commission. Hindus and Sikhs who had sincerely believed for years that the Sheikh was a genuine secularist were disappointed at his chameleon-like change and deserted the National Conference. Kashmiri Pandits in the Valley did so tacitly and silently but in Jammu region the Dogras left with a bang. Balraj Puri, President of the Jammu Provincial National Conference, raised banner of revolt and Sheikh had to dismiss him along with the entire body of active members of the Conference supporting Puri. In fact, the entire organization in the region became defiant and it was only in the Muslim belt of Doda and Rajouri where religious sentiment had been aroused to highest pitch that some remnants of the party survived.

Undeterred, however, Abdullah incessantly carried the religio-political war in other spheres and directions. Among his opponents were Shias and followers of Mirwaiz Mohammad Farooq, nicknamed Bakaras. In the Parliamentary election these people along with the Pandits in the Valley opposed the

National Conference candidates. The electioneering campaign conducted by Abdullah was thus not limited by Hindu-Muslim dimensions but assumed new Sunni-Shia and Sher-Bakara proportions too.

Within a few days, in the beginning of June, Sunni Muslims of the Valley and Doda and Poonch districts were sufficiently agitated and made to believe that if Janata won the elections Islam would be in danger for its enemies would capture the citidels of political power. It must be acknowledged that Abdullah did not fail to generate by these means an anti-Janata tide; he succeeded in persuading substantial sections of Sunni Muslims to forget at least for the time being, their grievances, hostility and hatred against him, his colleagues and his rule. He emerged once again as a hero, as the champion of the Muslim cause and the defender of Islam. If, in the process, secularism and communal harmony in the State received hard blows and were badly impaired, Sheikh did not mind it. If his reputation as a non-communal leader was damaged he ignored it believing that success at the polls will rehabilitate him in the eyes of the Indians as had happened on other occasions in the past forty years. Did he not advise his colleagues that if they could take care of the present, the future will take care of itself?

Basically and essentially a struggle for emancipation by down-trodden Kashmiris, the uprising of 1931 was unfortunately accompanied by religious fanaticism when a few Hindus were killed, Hindu homes and shops in Srinagar and other places looted on July 13 and after. The upheaval threw up Abdullah as a new messiah of the Kashmiris and knight-errant of Islam, and his party, Muslim Conference (later, in 1939, rechristened National Conference), as representative body of the community. Although when National Conference came to power July 13 was declared a national holiday and is celebrated annually as Martyrs Day, the Hindus and Sikhs as a class have never recognized it as such and mostly dissociate themselves with the celebration. They allege that neither the 1931 movement nor July 13 can be recognized national in character because non-Muslims have suffered at the hands of Muslim fanatics when the upheaval took place. By the end of 1932, Sheikh Abdullah fell out with some of his senior colleagues in the movement who were

commonly accepted as the hereditary leaders of the Muslim community. Having caught the imagination of ignorant sections of Kashmiris especially explosive youths, Abdullah collected a sizeable force of hoodlums to intimidate and cow down his opponents. Though the rift between him and old timers became permanent and has lasted to this day, he held his own by demonstrating the power of hooliganism in politics. By striking terror in the minds of those who opposed him, the small but organized band of hooligans made the public and the administration believe that he was the popular and genuine leader of the Kashmiris; others had lost the influence they wielded.

During the past forty-five years Kashmir political life has undergone many changes for better or for worse, but the two evils imbibed at the early stages have clung tenaciously to it. Abdullah and his followers have grown from mere agitators to be rulers of the State but have not outgrown the two evils. From time to time they have resorted to both religious fanaticism and rowdyism in fighting opposition and, as ill luck would have it, they have profited by it. As shown earlier, National Conference hooligans took a prominent part in elections to the Lok Sabha in March 1977 to frighten the supporters of Maulvi Iftikhar Hussain Ansari and Syed Gilani who opposed National Conference candidates. Public resentment had compelled the ruffians to lie low for a few weeks but when religious passions were aroused by painting Janata as a body thirsting for Muslim blood it facilitated the task of hooligans to restart their operations with public sympathy. Launching electioneering campaign on May 23 Abdullah introduced party candidates at Majahid Manzil and made a virulent attack on the opposition. Next day many Janata members were beaten up and molested. Among them was Peerzade Ali Shah, former Vice-President Kashmir National Conference; his house at Zaindar Mohalla was ransacked, his drugshop pelted and members of his family harassed. Then followed regular deprivations of the miscreants in different parts of Srinagar to bulldoze Janata supporters.

After a few days a new body called Youth Federation was formed under the auspices of National Conference. It enlisted riffraff, convicted criminals, notorious bad characters and a number of excitable educated youth. Under it different groups

came into existence to perform different functions. Those who indulged in violent acts and looting were given asylum in Mujahid Manzil. It became obvious before long that the police connived at the criminal activity and did not dare or try to apprehend the culprits.

While in power, National Conference leaders had taken sufficient care to see that before they relinquish office only their favourites and such others are put in key positions in the police and other departments as would prove helpful to them when out of power. This was a shrewd and farsighted move as the police officers stood them in good stead when the elections were in progress. Despite the repeated protests of Janata and other parties the administration could not activate the police force nor keep it neutral.

Emboldened by the partisan attitude of the police and other officials of the Government the hooligans widened their range of onslaughts threatening lives and property of peaceful citizens. On June 8, a dastard attack was made on the life of Dr. Jagat Mohini, head of the women's wing of the Janata Party and the candidate for election from Habba Kadal constituency, while she was returning home driven by her son after addressing a public meeting at Dalhasanyar. A big boulder hit the windscreen of the car smashing it and struck her face, breaking her eight teeth, fracturing her nose and jaw bone. She was taken home in an unconscious state and was in bed for about a month. The assault on Dr. Mohini was a part of calculated move by the National Conference to create insecurity and intimidate the Janata candidates and their supporters. On the same day when Mohini was seriously injured, G.M.D. Karra's house in Batamaloo was pelted with missiles as also the house of G.M. Bawan, another Janata candidate from Nagin constituency. A Janata procession in Anantnag was attacked with stones. "Attempts were made to overawe Janata and Congress workers in Chadura and other constituencies," wrote staff correspondent of *Times of India*. It was reported that National Conference workers had stored in their houses acid bottles and some lethal weapons to attack Janata members. In a statement, Mirwaiz Farooq complained that it was a pity that the National Conference led by Sheikh Abdullah, wanted to establish its supremacy by coercion and

not by democratic means. He charged National Conference leaders with adopting similar tactics in the past to cover up their misdeeds¹.

The National Conference started a flag war in which hooligans took a conspicuous part. The party was within its right to hoist party flags wherever it liked. It, however, went beyond its limit when party flags were raised on state buildings, mosques and government schools; buntings were also set up across public streets. The Janata Party had an equal right to do the same but the hooligans pulled down Janata flags by force causing skirmishes and brawls. The chief secretary to the Government, P.N. Kaul, called a meeting of the representatives of the main political parties, including the National Conference and the Janata Party, in his office where after discussion an agreement was concluded that hoisting of flags and raising of buntings would be confined to party offices or private houses whose owners were willing to allow it. From other places the concerned parties were asked to remove the flags and buntings. But the National Conference refused to do so, repudiated the agreement and disowned its own representative who had given his consent to it. What was worse, the hooligans went round the city attacked Janata Party offices and destroyed Janata flags and buntings with impunity. The protests of Janata leaders proved of no avail. "The war of the flags has become a war on nerves" wrote *Indian Express* correspondent².

On June 11, Mirwaiz Farooq a staunch supporter of the Janata Party and an intrepid fighter for Kashmir democracy, accompanied by hundreds of his followers in buses, went to Anantnag to address public meetings. This way of travelling in the countryside for election propaganda had been started by the National Conference. But Mirwaiz's move was resented by them. Throughout the route from Srinagar to Anantnag hooligan bands were posted to attack Mirwaiz's party. The reports published in the National Press are of one view on this point. The *Hindustan Times* correspondent said that the clashes started after buses carrying chairman Mirwaiz Mohammad Farooq of

¹*Times of India*, June 9, 1977.

²*Indian Express*, June 7, 1977.

the Awami Action Committee and his supporters reached Anantnag. The National Conference workers who had assembled at a distance from the venue of the meeting (in support of the Janata candidate Dr. Abdul Majid) started throwing stones. A large number of buses were damaged. The clashes then spread to other parts of the town. The Janata Party was, however, able to hold its meeting; there were no incidents at the meeting. But buses carrying students returning after a day long trip were attacked. Many students were injured and ten of them were admitted in Srinagar hospital¹.

Samachar reported the incident thus :

"The offices of the Awami Action Committee and the Janata Party in the centre of Anantnag as well as several shops suffered damage as a result of heavy stoning. . . As the Mirwaiz's supporters boarded their vehicles for the return journey, there was stone throwing. Word spread that National Conference workers had plans to attack them en route and the convoy moved warily. At Khanabal where the Mirwaiz had been given an enthusiastic welcome by college students on his arrival, a hail of stones greeted them. The story was repeated all along the national highway. At Bijbihara where Mirwaiz had addressed a brief meeting on the outward journey his followers had to virtually stone their way through hostile crowds. At Awantipura police halted the traffic apparently to clear the miscreants lining the highway"².

Many houses in Awantipura were set on fire and hundreds of the residents rendered shelterless and destitute. It was a signal for the Mirwaiz's party to turn away and take a detour to reach Srinagar. "The flames could be seen from a distance of more than five kms", reported *Hindustan Times* correspondent³.

The staff correspondent of the *Times of India* wrote : "As Maulvi Farooq's supporters stormed into the main chowk of Anantnag, National Conference workers began hurling stones on them. . . The National Conference workers who had stored in their houses and shops rocks and stones attacked Maulvi

¹*Hindustan Times*, June 12, 1977.

²*Ibid.*

³*Ibid.*

Farooq's supporters who passed through Bijbehara and Sangam. . . There was violence in Pampore and Pan Chowk (Pant Chhuk) also".

A large number of tourists and school children, including girls, returning from excursion to Pahalgam and other picnic resorts in South Kashmir were injured as the hooligans resorted to indiscriminate pelting on passing vehicles; some of the students were injured and many others were in tears.

The role of the police force deployed in Anantnag and other towns was notable no less than deplorable. The staff correspondent of the *Times of India* observed : "As they (the hooligans) were ruling the roost in the Anantnag chowk, the police virtually stood by as silent spectators." The police no doubt exploded tear gas shells but instead of using them against law-breakers and miscreants threw them at the victims of rowdism. The correspondent added : "Some of the tear gas shells landed on buses, carrying women and children, who had come to attend the meeting from Srinagar. As Maulvi Farooq's supporters ran helter skelter to take shelter in lanes and houses, National Conference supporters hurled stones at Awami Action Committee office breaking all window panes. They caught hold of the stray supporters of Maulvi Farooq and beat them up".¹

The *Indian Express* representative reported that "scores of women and children in the vehicles were mercilessly attacked and injured".²

Next day after making an intensive survey of the whole area the staff correspondent of the *Times of India* wrote a long report in which he said :

"Over 2000 school children and tourists who were returning after a day's outing in Pahalgam, Kokarnag, Daksum and Verinag, were in the long convoy of buses and cars which became the target of the fury of miscreants who hit them with stones and other missiles. Many children and others were injured and treated in hospitals. Residents of Awantipura were ruing the day when the National Conference and other party flags were hoisted in the town. 'We don't play politics nor do we

¹*Times of India*, June 12, 1977.

²*Indian Express*, June 12, 1977.

want anybody to become our leader. Why did they burn our house', a middle-aged woman wiping tears from her eyes and squatting before her charred house said. . . The door to door campaigning and propaganda have divided people even in small towns. They were living quite happily like good neighbours until yesterday when the miscreants incited violence in which stones and rocks were freely used. . . The aftermath of violence was responsible for total strike by Kashmir Motor Drivers' Association (K.M.D.A.) which runs a large number of tourist bus services to different resorts in Kashmir Valley. The office bearers of the K.M.D.A. told newsmen that 123 buses belonging to the Association were damaged in stone throwing yesterday and a dozen drivers and conductors were hurt. . . Their spokesman alleged that National Conference workers had been threatening them with dire consequences because they had opposed Sheikh Abdullah's transport policy".¹ The correspondent had himself been caught in the mob violence on the previous day at Bijbihara and had sought shelter in a shop².

The violent incidents at Anantnag and other towns created widespread resentment and uneasiness in South Valley and, in fact, all over the State. Over a hundred Janata Party men and women were injured some of them seriously, who were admitted into hospitals for treatment. Maulana Sayed and myself went to S.M.H.S. Hospital in Srinagar and met fourteen patients who had been maimed for life, to console them.

According to *Statesman* correspondent "tear gas shells were burst at Budshah Chowk at dusk to disperse a pro-Abdullah group, which broke the glass panes of a building where the leading urdu daily *Srinagar Times* had its offices". The correspondent reported that "two vehicles which brought passengers from Ladakh to Srinagar were stoned and their windscreens smashed".³

The Kashmir Motor Drivers' Association suffered a heavy loss. As many as 123 buses had been badly damaged and 15 drivers injured while returning to Srinagar from Anantnag.

¹*Times of India*, June 13, 1977.

²*Ibid.*

³*Statesman*, June 13, 1977.

"Rows of buses with their windcreens and windows shattered bearing all the tell-tale marks of the stone throwing", wrote special representative of *Statesman*, "lined Srinagar's main thoroughfares in front of the Kashmir Motor Drivers' Association. All shops in the city centre are closed and groups of people stood by the wayside all through the day watching scores of stone-throwing urchins playing hit and run games with the police."¹ In protest the Association resorted to a strike.

In a Press conference the K.M.D.A. chairman, Ghulam Nabi, said "the strike may not be called off unless the administration took action against partisan policemen and known criminals and goondas employed by the National Conference to intimidate drivers and passengers". He added : "The National Conference were wreaking vengeance on the Association members since the organization had supported the Janata Party. The hostility towards the Association started on the day Sheikh Abdullah warned on his return from Jammu that the National Conference would settle accounts with the drivers for supporting the Janata Party".²

On June 12, I met K.T. Satarwala, Adviser to the Governor, and strongly protested against the rising tide of hooliganism and requested him that effective measures be taken to curb National Conference goondas who were moving freely and taking shelter in Mujhid Manzil when they needed it. I also wrote a letter to him stating that all evidence goes to prove that the National Conference leaders had made preparations in advance for the attack on Awami Action Committee workers and to disallow Maulvi Farooq from addressing public meetings in South Kashmir. "This is disconcerting enough," I said, "but what is most painful is the attitude of some of the police officials who are reported not only to have witnessed the defiance of law and criminal activities of the National Conference hooligans without taking any action but also abetted and even encouraged the miscreants until the situation became very threatening".

To offset the effect of Mirwaiz's tour of South Kashmir the National Conference despatched a fleet of buses on June 14,

¹*Statesman*, June 13, 1977.

²*Ibid.*

overflowing with workers to Anantnag. There was no attempt on the part of their opponents to attack them or disturb their meetings. But on their way to and fro the National Conference workers destroyed Janata flags, buntings, name boards, and other symbols and signs of opposition wherever they found them. This caused clashes and renewed the tension. Two days later, another fleet of vehicles carrying N.C. workers headed by Dr. Farooq, son of Abdullah, went to Baramulla to address public meetings. On return they repeated the depredations and onslaughts on opponents, looted shops displaying Janata emblem or flags and mishandled many men believed to be supporters of Janata Party.

Clashes occurred at Pattan, Sangrama and Narbal when a number of men and women were injured. "Tension gripped many parts of Baramulla district and Srinagar city", reported *Statesman* correspondent on June 18, "following a call for hartal given by the National Conference to protest against the death of two of its workers allegedly at the hands of Janata Party workers." It was officially announced, however, that while the first incident was a case of murder by some unknown hand the second was a road accident and not a political event.¹

The tragic incidents at Anantnag and other towns temporarily awakened the authorities to the gravity of the situation which they had persistently and deliberately overlooked despite the protests of the Janata Party, other political bodies and the peaceful citizens. Over 200 miscreants and militant National Conference workers were taken into custody. Oddly enough, to demonstrate their sham neutrality the police officers arrested a number of Janata and Awami Action Committee workers too who could not even remotely be connected with any unlawful activity. And what was stranger and significant the notorious ones among the arrested National Conference workers were released after only a few days; they were given warm welcome in processions thus converting miscreants into heroes overnight. It added to the tempo of hooliganism of the National Conference which attained new heights with passing of every day after the middle of June.

¹*Statesman*, June 19, 1977.

National Conference policy of intimidation and terror became increasingly successful in the achievement of its objective. Several sections of the people in the Valley were cowed down and afraid of opposing or even criticising Abdullah and his party. They were convinced that neither the administration nor the Janata Party were capable of protecting them from the assaults of the National Conference hooligans. Many among them counselled wisdom in supporting Abdullah or in any case not opposing him.

The hooliganism took a new and more virulent turn in the closing days of the month of June for a reason to be presently discussed. Hardly a day passed when more than one Janata worker or those innocent persons who were suspected of having Janata sympathies were not brought to Forest Lodge with their clothes torn and limbs injured by beatings. On June 16, a Shia lady escorted by a few relatives was brought in whose breasts had been pulled causing bruises and swelling; her tattered shirt and trousers were stained with blood. We could do no better than send her to Adviser Satarwala with a letter imploring him to get such brutalities stopped. We also told him that a free and fair election to State legislature could not be held in an atmosphere surcharged with intimidation and terror. The violence reached its apogee on the black July 3 when polls took place. But of it I shall say in detail in a separate chapter.

That the National Conference leaders had to resort to violence on such a wide scale, unprecedented in its own history, furnished ample evidence of the massive opposition from the people they had to confront. But even the atmosphere of terror they were able to generate in the Valley failed to inspire belief in them that they would be able to win a majority of seats in the elections. The apprehension of sustaining defeat gnawed at their souls; they had not therefore ruled out the idea of boycotting the elections as a last resort to save their face.

Though Mirza Beg and G.M. Shah hotly denied rumours going the rounds that National Conference was contemplating not to participate in the elections, some of their moves pointed towards it. Central Janata Party had decided, unlike the Congress when in power, to allow all parties fighting the

elections anywhere in the country to use Radio and TV for propagation of their aims. In Kashmir the three main parties—Congress, National Conference and Janata Unit—got invitations from the Directors of Kashmir Radio and TV to meet them and fix time and date when they would like to depute their representatives to air their views on the objectives of their parties for contesting elections. All the three parties arrived at an agreement on the dates but subsequently, on June 14, National Conference decided to boycott the broadcasts from both Radio Kashmir and Doordarshan (TV) Kendra in protest against the “partial attitude” of the two organizations alleging that news items pertaining to the Janata and its ally, Awami Action Committee, were being played up.¹ Was this the first step towards the boycott of the elections? Many in the political as well as official circles thought so.

There is ground to believe that Abdullah entertained grave apprehensions of the consequences of defeat of his party. There had been a persistent demand from his opponents within Jammu and Kashmir and outside the State for setting up of an enquiry commission to investigate misuse of power, jobbery, corruption and nepotism when he was in office. Central Janata Government was not averse to it. Home Minister Charan Singh referred to it in a public meeting and revealed that Government was already looking into the matter. It caused the Sheikh much nervousness and depression.

Abdullah's first reaction to the charges brought against him was to hit back at the top Janata leaders of Kashmir. But none of them except A.G. Lone had ever held any office. Lone had the distinction of being alone in resigning ministership in 1973 on moral principles which had been universally praised; the *Statesman* wrote an editorial on the event paying encomiums to Lone. Maulana Sayed was respected alike by friend and foe for the hermit-like life of poverty he lived, for self-abnegation and self-effacement. When Abdullah in a public statement charged G.M.D. Karra for being on the payroll of Pakistan the latter retorted: “Those who live in glass houses should not

¹*Indian Express*, June 15, 1977

throw stones on others". He said his name did not figure in the list of those receiving money recently published in Pakistan.¹ In coffee house, restaurants and tea shops in Srinagar the book on Kashmir written by B.N. Mullik, a former chief of CBI, was circulated: it contained facsimile copies of letters and receipts of National Conference leaders, including Begum Abdullah, pertaining to the money which came from Pakistan, for a number of years when Abdullah and Afzal Beg were spreading anti-India venom through Plebiscite Front.

Abdullah had been suffering from diabetes and some other minor ailments for a number of past years. It is not therefore surprising that tension and depression caused by stiff opposition to him should affect his heart. On June 13, a National Conference Press release announced that "he is suffering from heart trouble for the last one week".² An expert, performer, he can recite holy verses of the Koran, weep, moan and indulge in self-pity on public platform to arouse mass emotions. To feign illness of a serious nature was a calculated move on his part to arrest the onward march of the opposition and pointedly invite the attention of the people, both friends and foes, towards him. The theatrical immediately met with a success which even the most optimistic of his supporters did not expect.

Two specialists, Dr. M. C. Bhatia, head of the department of cardiology, and Dr. J. S. Bajaj, professor of medicine at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in New Delhi, were flown to Srinagar to examine the "patient".

The news of Abdullah's illness spread like wild fire; hundreds of his worked-up followers paraded the streets and proceeded to his house. Telegrams and messages of sympathy including those from Prime Minister Desai, Home Minister Charan Singh, Janata Party President Chandra Shekhar, Mrs. Indira Gandhi poured into the "sick" leader's house. Dignitaries from all classes and communities paid calls at his residence. Two

¹*Times of India*, April 8, 1977.

²*Indian Express*, June 14, 1977.

topranking generals of the Indian Army came with floral tributes and good wishes from rank and file. The city talked of nothing else but the illness of the Sher-i-Kashmir. What else did the "heart patient" need to boost the fallen shares of his political stock ?

The news reached Forest Lodge in the afternoon on June 13 and Maulana Sayed and G.M.D. Karra who partly because they always have had a sneaking regard for Sheikh's personality, and partly also to show that political differences should not come in the way of good social relationship, wanted to pay a call and cheer him up. I must confess I was opposed to the idea because apart from disbelieving that the Sheikh was really that ill, I thought it would impart undue respectability to him in the eyes of the people in the State and outside. In any case, I expressed reluctance to accompany my colleagues if they were determined to go to the Sheikh's residence. But both of them were insistent that I must also go with them and in deference to their wishes I had to yield.

Foolish though the call seems in retrospect, none of us had the remotest idea of the ugly scene of rowdyism which was enacted by the ragtag and bobtail collected outside Abdullah's residence. Our car was mobbed, kicked and pelted; its rear windscreen was smashed : attempts were made to drag us out and assassinate us; no invective was bad enough to hurl at us. This was done in the presence of prominent National Conference leaders including Begum Abdullah and her son Dr. Farooq. The tact and skill that superintendent police, Hafeez, displayed in making way for us through the furious crowd saved the situation. He conducted us into the adjacent house of Sheikh's son-in-law, G. M. Shah. The rowdy scene outside was disgusting enough, but a more nauseating event waited us inside. While seated in the living room, one after the other, Shah and Mohiuddin Mattu, a near relation of Sheikh, entered and in a barrage of words hurled filthy abuses at us threatening to tear us to bits. Afzal Beg, Sadaruddin Mujahid, Habib Ullah Zargar and two other admirers of Sheikh were present in the room but made no attempt to stop Shah and Mattu from acting in the vulgar, indecent and uncultured manner. Karra and myself wanted to leave but Maulana insisted that we must pay a call on Sheikh and

enquire after his health from himself. This was not allowed. We overheard a member of the family telling Drs. Bajaj and Bhatia that the Janata visitors wanted to see Sheikh and if this may be allowed; the reply was: "We would not prevent them from doing so."

We were rebuked by colleagues for the inadvisable visit when back in Forest Lodge and by friends for many days.

Amusingly, soon after we returned, a special messenger brought in the evening a letter from Abdullah, signed by himself and addressed to Maulana Sayed. It read:

"I learned that you had come over to my house along with Karra Sahib and Bazaz Sahib to look me up. I am grateful for the concern shown by you all for my health. I am feeling much better now and medical treatment is continuing satisfactorily. I was pained to know that while you and your colleagues were entering my house a group of persons broke the back window of the car in which you all were seated. Please accept my regrets for this sad incident and convey the same to your colleagues."

The letter contained no word of apology or regret for the unprovoked and unbecoming behaviour of Shah and Mattu.

The letter gave no indication of the seriousness of Sheikh's illness; his handwriting was firm as usual. The actor had for the moment forgotten the histrionic role he was playing, while sending the letter in haste.

After thoroughly examining Sheikh Abdullah the two specialists from New Delhi declared the ailment not serious and said that "the treatment prescribed by the two local physicians, Dr. Ali Mohammed Jan and Dr. G.Q. Allaqaband, should be continued".¹

But the outcome of feigned sickness and New Delhi doctors visit was highly satisfactory to the Sheikh and his followers. National Conference leadership jumped at the idea that for the party's success at the polls it is necessary that people in the Valley should remain stricken by the perplexing belief that Sheikh is very ill. As a matter of fact, rumours were spread in the following days that his left side was paralysed and he could

¹*Times of India*, June 14, 1977.

not move from the bed; his photographs on sickbed in a position evoking human sympathy of both supporters and opponents appeared in a local journal. On June 25 an unconfirmed report was circulated that he was already dead and the body was kept in tons of ice so that his removal from the scene did not adversely affect the chances of the party at the polls.

As we shall see the feigned nature of the illness was exposed on the day it was declared that the National Conference Party had "won" the majority of seats in the election.

The histrionics of illness worked wonderfully well. Plans were formulated to take the maximum advantage of it under cover of religious ceremonies. Crowds of National Conference supporters visited mosques, shrines and other sacred places under pretence to offer prayers for the recovery of the dying leader. "Several hundred rams were taken to Hazaratbal and other mosques for being offered as sacrifices for the Sheikh's recovery".¹ The gatherings were essentially political for mobilizing voters in support of National Conference candidates and for discrediting the opposition. It gave effective shelter to the rowdies to threaten and, if necessary, thrash Janata workers. Any criticism of Abdullah, his colleagues or National Conference candidates was considered callous while the aged Lion of Kashmir was hovering between life and death. Begum Abdullah, Afzal Beg and other stalwarts of the party shed tears addressing public meetings and telling people that the last wish of Sheikh was to make the candidates successful at the polls. For 45 years of uninterrupted service rendered by him to the Muslim community, they remonstrated, this was the minimum wage to which he was entitled. The ruse paid handsomely and there were indications in the last week of June that the tide had begun to turn in favour of the National Conference though the position of Janata Party was still far from being hopeless.

¹*Times of India*, June 14, 1977.

Bickerings in Kashmir Janata

AFTER Independence, rulers of Jammu and Kashmir State were not the freely chosen representatives of the people as they should have been but were the nominees and proteges of the Central Congress Government. Whether they were the leaders of the National Conference as in the early years (1947-1953) and during 1975-1977 or belonged to the Congress as in the intervening period, their source of power was New Delhi. No doubt, to hoodwink the world opinion and silence the democratic elements in the State, the farce of elections was enacted periodically along with the general elections in the rest of the country, but the fact remained that the final decision about selection of candidates, extent of rigging and supply of funds rested with the Central Congress leadership. Not even once were the elections fair and free, and a candidate holding independent views had slim chance to get elected. It was taken for granted that so long as the ruling party was in the good books of the central government it was sure by hook or by crook to win the majority at the polls; most of its candidates were declared elected without contest.

A tradition had been established under Congress rule that with the announcement of elections to the State Assembly local Congress leaders would nominate candidates, get them approved by the centre and supply them with ample funds to "contest".

Most of the candidates, if not all, would feel sure to get "elected" without even the show of a fight. Poor voters, especially in the Valley, were deprived of their democratic right to choose their representatives; when in later elections a candidate here or there was successful in defeating a ruling party nominee, it surprised everybody and was considered a freak in the election process.

It must therefore be acknowledged that when Congress rule was overthrown and Janata Party came to power in the centre not a few political workers in the State rallied round the yellow and green banner in the hope that the same old tradition would be followed by the new rulers; it would be only a question of selection of candidates by the Ad Hoc Committee and formal approval of the the same by the central leadership; funds would come in abundance and the candidates would get "elected" even if they were not popular in their constituencies and did not exert themselves to secure votes from the people. It was generally believed that the Janata Party would form government whether or not the people willingly voted it to power. No wonder that when a second adviser to the Governor, K.T. Satarwala, was appointed it was believed he had been deputed with the object of mainly assisting Janata Party to capture the legislature by "winning" majority of votes. Despite my best endeavours to discount this unfounded impression, the view persisted to the last that Satarwala was a pro-Janata man and every Janata supporter looked towards him for help and would feel angry and sullen if any of his demands whether reasonable or not was rejected. It is true that National Conference had launched a consistent and venomously spiteful campaign that Satarwala had come to rig the elections and would do so at any cost. As the scene after scene of the election drama unfolded, I was astounded to discover that a number of prominent Janata leaders including some members of the Ad Hoc Committee, harboured such an anti-democratic misconception. When I tried to argue with them that in such a case no principle was involved in the election contest and we would be replacing the old totalitarianism by a new one, I was mocked at by these colleagues: "You are living in a world of fantasy and sure to be vanquished" was the common reply to my protestations that I will never support the

theory of Abdullahism without Abdullah which these friends were propounding in effect.

The Ad Hoc Committee was a body of dissimilar elements, some of whom were not friendly to each other and gave vent to hostile feelings, not unoften impolitely. The members had no unity of purpose, objective or principle; the only ground on which they stood was their hatred of Abdullah's arrogant attitude and dictatorial behaviour, and authoritarianism of both National Conference and Congress parties. The main aim of the members, barring a few honourable exceptions, was capture of power and neither vindication of human values nor establishment of democratic norms and principles in public life in the State.

As the day of election drew nearer the number of Janata workers holding the view of achieving success by means fair or foul which came to my notice, grew larger. There occurred a moral crisis in my personal life. I had come to Kashmir to participate in practical politics to assist the people in the demolition of totalitarianism and dictatorship of a caucus which had entrenched itself and in the rise of democratic forces in State politics. I had made this abundantly clear to everyone. I saw no meaning or sense in our struggle in general and the battle for the ballot in particular, if we harboured the idea that Janata must be put in the saddle by the same underhand means as was the National Conference and the Congress in the past. To me this was revolting and repugnant and therefore totally unacceptable.

One week before leaving New Delhi for Srinagar, I had recorded in my diary on Friday, April 8 :

"I made it clear to both Shamim and Karra when we met that I shall have no interest in the political movement in Jammu and Kashmir State, if the aim is not founding of democratic norms and values but of replacing one coterie by another even if the latter is composed of our friends. I dislike to bring any person or group to power irrespective of the wishes of the State people. We have to shatter anti-democratic traditions laid during past thirty years, once and for all."

Dismayed to find that some members of the Ad Hoc Committee too had no qualms if the elections were rigged to defeat

our opponents. I thought it advisable to know the views of Maulana Masoodi on the crucial matter of moral significance. I was heartened to learn that he was in entire agreement with me that, come what may, our weapons should be clean and we should not play foul in any case even though our adversaries may come down to any low level in defeating us. He discouraged, like myself, any talk of rigging or casting false votes for Janata candidates even if it were possible with government connivance which, I am sure, it was not. Both of us believed that by utilizing only clean methods in the struggle for power even if we are defeated, we shall have sown the seeds of democracy which will in course of time sprout and germinate; otherwise we shall have strengthened the pernicious traditions which we profess to fight and desire to uproot. It was but natural that the blame for the defeat of most of the Janata candidates at the hustings should be laid at the door of the two of us. I, however, stand unrepentant at what has happened and believe the same is the case with the Maulana, though both of us deeply deplore the fascist methods employed by National Conference leadership in the elections.

The securing of funds was a different matter. I was not opposed to central leadership supplying them from its party coffers to fight the elections. But here too the old tradition was to furnish large and equal amounts to each and every candidate irrespective of his or her merits and needs. The Maulana and I held that well-to-do candidates should be grateful for having been selected and should spend money on electioneering from their own pockets. As for others, funds should be given according to financial circumstances and actual requirements of a candidate. Elections should not be converted into business and made a source of income. The distinction caused heart burning and I know how tremendously difficult it was for the Maulana who handled party funds, to distribute them on the basis of the principle of merit. Again, it dismayed me to find some of our valued co-workers who were not poverty-stricken greedily demanding money day after day. But I must hasten to add that I, unexpectedly, met a few noble persons to whom money did not matter as long as they could effectively carry on the work in their constituencies with the aid of propaganda literature

published by the Party. I have no doubt in my mind that if democracy will survive and grow in the State these men of promise will prove its bulwork and asset in days to come.

I have already alluded to the unsatisfactory manner in which the Ad Hoc Committee of the Janata Party was brought into being. It caused jealousies and many politicians who thought they were entitled, due to their past record and position in public life, to be on the Committee but were not included, grumbled and tried to bring the Committee into disrepute. The aspirants for the membership of the committee were numberless. Besides, the members of the Ad Hoc Committee could not agree on the new nominations which Maulana Masoodi, as the convener, had the authority to make. Whenever he attempted to propose names of certain candidates fierce bickerings took place among the Kashmiri politicians; only four workers from Jammu region—Rishi Kumar Kaushal, Tilak Raj Sharma, Shiv Ram Manmar and Ved Bhasin—were chosen; though five others from the Valley were proposed but they were not approved till the end because there was no unanimity among the Kashmiri members of the committee about them.

I was a target of attack by one group of Kashmiri Pandits; they denied my representative character which I never claimed. Representations were made and deputation led to every authority from Convener, Maulana Masoodi to Prime Minister Morarji Desai blaming me as anti-Pandit, Radical Humanist and atheist. As I had no keen desire to be a member of the Ad Hoc Committee and I had never asked to be nominated as such, I considered the controversy futile and unnecessary. I asked the Maulana to relieve me of the burden and save the Janata from avoidable controversy but he would not let me go and I thought it morally improper to let him down. In any case, I was to leave the Janata by the end of the elections.

It is notable that Pandit youth, or at any rate an organised section of it, was happy at my being on the committee. I received a bunch of letters from different parts of the State to this effect. An organization called Kashmiri Pandit Yuva Morcha opposed the group which disliked my membership of the Committee.

In letters which Shadi Lal Bhat, President of the Morcha, wrote to me, the youth extended fullest support to Kashmir Janata Party. Being the author of the controversial book, *the Role of Bhagavad Gita in Indian History*, and an atheist were the main arguments advanced by orthodox Pandits for my being unfit to have a place on the Ad Hoc Committee. The protestations of my colleagues that, firstly, I never asked to be a member of the Committee and, secondly, I was not nominated because I represented Pandit community but because my services and long experience in State politics were needed by the Party, proved of no avail.

Maulana Masoodi made a sporting offer to disgruntled Pandit factions when they persisted in their demand to have representation on the Committee : "choose unanimously someone and I shall unhesitatingly have him on the Committee provided he cherishes faith in Janata principles". Though every faction continued to press for the nomination no unanimous choice was ever made and the matter rested at that.

Being a practicing secularist was considered a disqualification of Ghulam Nabi Untoo, a former member of Indian Parliament and a consistent Congressman for years, by some sections of Muslims. He is a selfless man devoted to the cause of democracy and rejected the suggestion to personally contest elections; the objection against him therefore cut no ice.

The jealousy which deepened into enmity among some members of the Ad Hoc Committee came prominently to notice at the time of nomination of new members to the Committee, as also when the eight-member committee to select candidates for election was constituted, and again when the Yuva Janata (Youth Wing) was formed on May 27. It emasculated the Kashmir Janata.

The ugliest aspect of the jealousy came into view while candidates were chosen for contesting elections during the closing days of May. There were over 250 applicants for 42 seats of the Assembly in the Kashmir Valley. Little thought was given to the merits of a candidate for becoming a legislator. Majority of the members of the election committee were themselves candidates and everyone wanted to have as many supporters in the

Assembly as he could muster. It assumed the shape of a tussle between the favourites of different aspirants for power in the new government and not a choice among meritorious applicants deserving to be legislators. In the circumstances, while cases of some qualified claimants were ignored many good-for-nothing persons were chosen and given tickets who had no chance to win for lack of support of the local people.

The truth is that there were as many as four persons in the Ad Hoc Committee who believed they were rightful claimants for chief ministership in the next government. Granted that the Janata Party was destined to come to power by securing majority of votes at the polls if possible with the support of the people and without it if necessary, and granted also that almost every candidate chosen by the election committee would be successful in the contest, the aspirants for chief ministership were anxious to have as many of their favourites as possible accepted as candidates in order to facilitate their task at the time of election of the leader of the Janata Legislative Party. Besides paving way for failure of the party at the hustings it only widened the cleavage in the Ad Hoc Committee.

While heated and acrimonious discussions were going on in the election committee and candidates chosen for different constituencies, I was wondering what will happen to Kashmir if somehow Janata Party succeeded in capturing majority of seats and getting the opportunity of forming the government. No doubt was left in my mind that it would be a bad day for Kashmir democracy even though National Conference totalitarianism and Abdullah's dictatorship would come to an end. It would be replacing King Stork with King Log. I must confess that I felt disheartened and ill at ease by the way some senior members of the Ad Hoc Committee were conducting themselves.

The mutual bickerings coupled with idiosyncracies of some members of Ad Hoc Committee dealt blows at Janata Unit and hampered the growth of democratic movement when its tide was still running high.

Having accepted the role of guide, philosopher and friend of Kashmir Janata Party Maulana Masoodi should have gird up his loins and functioned as a dynamic leader. Instead of doing

so, he stuck to certain ultra-Gandhian fads in the false, though sincere, belief that this was the best method of building the Party organisation. He persistently refused to activate himself which alone could have brought him in close contact with the people in all parts of the State whose hopes of a new and just era dawning in the State had been raised. He disdained to move out of Ganderbal, a small hamlet 30 km. from Srinagar. He even turned down the proposal to have a telephone line installed which would have connected his home with the outside world thus offsetting disadvantages of living in seclusion. Precious time of important and busy people was wasted to meet the Maulana. The members of Ad Hoc Committee had frequently to make avoidable journey to Ganderbal to seek his views on many big and small matters that needed immediate attention. When Forest Lodge was secured to house the main office of the Janata Party, it was with great difficulty that I could break the Maulana's resistance and prevail upon him to shift there.

Partly due to old age and failing health but mainly enchanted by peculiar romanticism to live in ivory tower, the Maulana expressed reluctance to tour the State even when candidates impressed upon him how sorely they needed his presence in their constituencies to inspire the voters by his sage advice for stoutly fighting the evils of totalitarianism and corruption. No reasons, no appeals and no warnings would move the Maulana who stood immovable like a rock in Forest Lodge until the last.

Karra's idiosyncracies proved even more annoying to his colleagues and undermining the rising forces of freedom. Somehow it came into his head that if he pretended to withdraw from contest in the field of election, he would be able to eclipse his rivals and strengthen the Janata Unit. I tried to dissuade him from taking this peurile, hypocritical and tactless step fraught with vicious implications. But one day in a gathering of young men, without consulting any of his colleague or even a bosom friend, he made a declaration at the spur of the moment that he had decided not to stand as a candidate for election. It lacked sincerity. With a little pressure in a meeting of Ad Hoc Committee that was brought to bear on him the next day, he recanted but not before he had made a fool of himself and lowered the prestige of Janata Unit.

The Partisan Governor and a Disappointed Adviser

A number of people belonging to different political camps felt that if the elections were to be really free and fair both the Governor, L.K. Jha, and his adviser, S. Banerji, should go and be replaced by impartial persons. Several allegations, some of them of a serious nature including their partiality towards Abdullah and his party, were made against both. I gave no credence to the accusations because, for one thing, in New Delhi I had heard words of appreciation from friends at least one of whom, M.R.A. Baig, knew them personally and could vouchsafe their integrity and capability. As a matter of fact, Jha and Banerji have had a uniform good record of work and had satisfactorily discharged important jobs of responsibility under central government in the past. There was, therefore, no reason to entertain misgivings about the two functionaries who wielded full power over the State under the Governor's rule. But it was wellknown that by living for a few years in salubrious climate but murky politics of Kashmir even men of proven integrity turn to be different.

It was alleged that by having yielded to Abdullah on March 27 dissolving the State Assembly in which Congress Party enjoyed a clear majority and was entitled to form government after having voted out the Sheikh, L.K. Jha had not provided

a shining example of his impartiality.

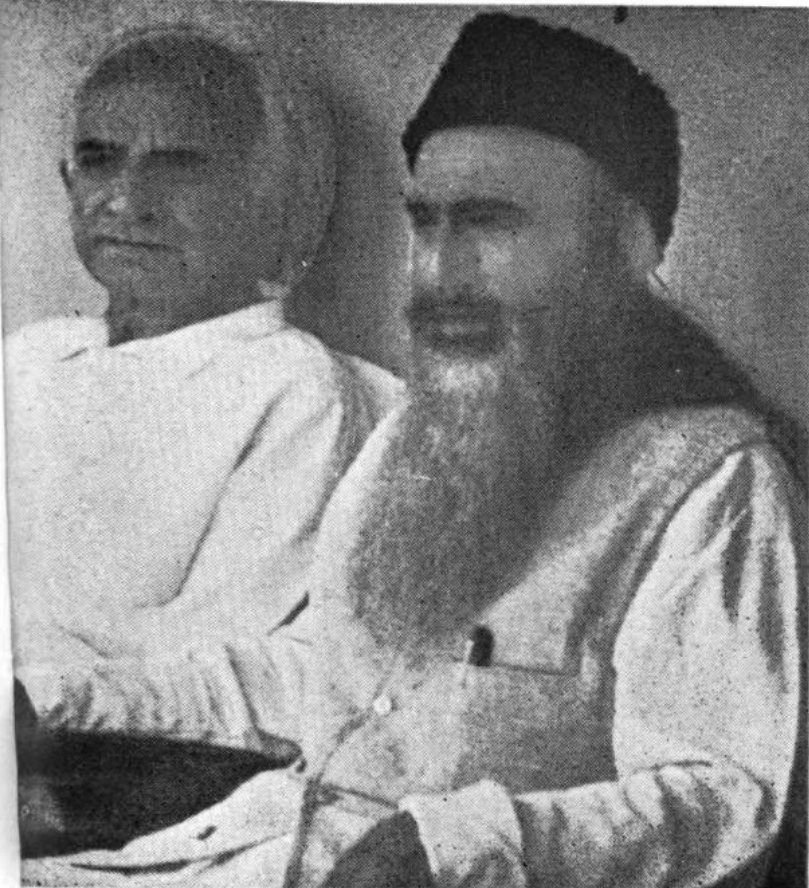
Abdullah in a statement on March 29, 1977, not only welcomed the dissolution of the Assembly but said, significantly, that "interests of the State and wellbeing of its people are safe in the hands of the Governor". He added that "in this onerous task the Governor and his adviser will have our whole-hearted cooperation and support".¹ But opponents of the Sheikh described numberless small and big events to prove that Jha and Banerji were party to misuse of power by Sheikh during two years of his administration. These tales must have been carried to Government of India which though reluctant to remove the two men from the scene, were compelled to have another adviser appointed to be in charge of the election and inspire confidence of the State people in the impartiality of the administration. He was K.T. Satarwala.

Anticipating fierce contest in the elections, Governor Jha and Adviser Banerji launched warily on their course of ruling the State by themselves. In a broadcast from the Srinagar station of AIR, Jha said : "It will be our endeavour to deploy officers of integrity in the electoral process. Strict instructions have been given to all concerned to provide the fullest protection to all political parties and individuals to carry on their legitimate activities. Action without fear or favour, will be taken against those elements which take recourse to lawlessness. Stone throwing and other acts of hooliganism will be put down with a firm hand". Jha assured the State people : "I shall do everything within my power to ensure that the people are able to exercise their right of franchise freely and fearlessly".² What more did the people, especially the democrats, desire or demand ?

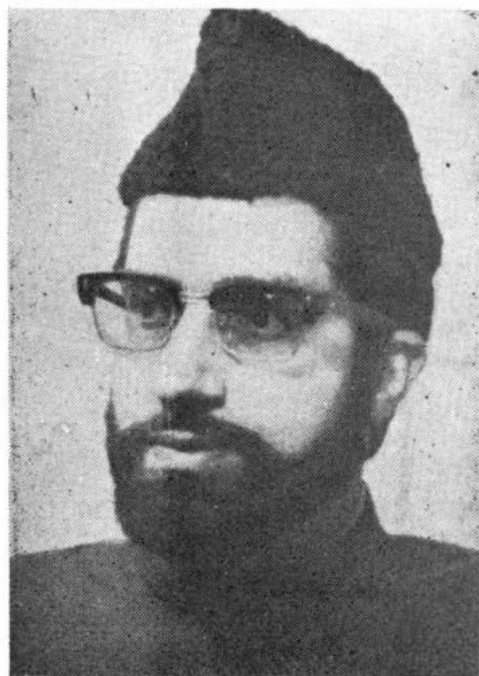
Next day Adviser Banerji appealed to political parties in the State to adopt a self-imposed code of conduct so that "model conditions" were created for holding elections to the State Assembly in a free and peaceful atmosphere. Addressing a news conference he pledged that "the administration on its part would perform its duty impartially and with dedication so that

¹*Indian Express*, March 30, 1977.

²*Indian Express*, April 2, 1977.



**Maulana M. S. Masoodi (right)
and Prem Nath Bazaz**



**Maulvi Mohammad Farooq,
Mirwaiz**

"We demand elections should be free and fair for the first time in post-Independence era. Democracy should have a chance to rise in Kashmir as in the rest of India"

In April 1977 "The electorate has paid the Congress proper remuneration by burying it....Kashmir Congress is a dirty gutter...Democracy will undoubtedly thrive under Janata Party. We yearn to be its ally...Jan Sanghis are our brothers."

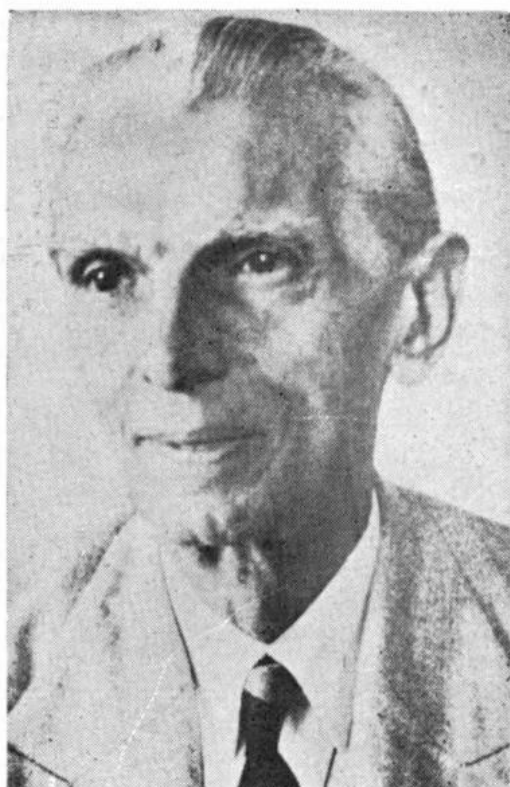
In June 1977 "Janata Party is anti-Muslim Jan Sangh is new garb... the hands of Jan Sangh leaders are still soiled with Muslim blood."

Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah



Mirza M. A. Beg



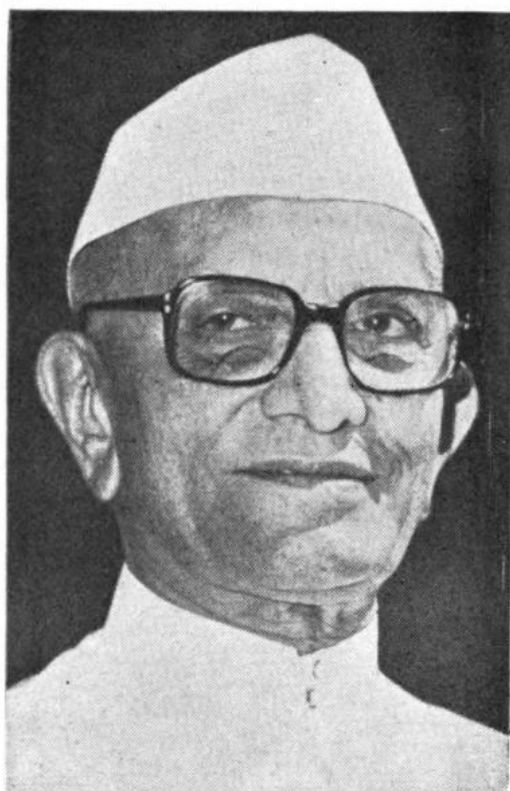


Quaide Azam M. A. Jinnah

"Indulgence in most offensive and vituperative language has become Sheikh Abdullah's second nature.. Goondaism must be put down at any cost."

"Goondaism would not be tolerated... Whatever has happened in the past this time the elections are bound to be free and fair".

Home Minister Charan Singh



Prime Minister Morarji Desai

"The State Government should deal unsparingly with goondaism. Those officials who lack sense of responsibility should be removed from key posts and partisan officials should be suspended and punished."

"The Government will not hesitate to take strongest action if there is any attempt to resort to violence and intimidation".

Defence Minister Jagjivan Ram





Governor L. K. Jha
Partisan



Adviser K. T. Satarwala
Conscientious and well-meaning but
rendered ineffective

Sheikh Abdullah's theatricals in Sickbed

With the support of high-ups in the administration the histrionics paid well
Photo AFTAB





**Victims of Hooliganism
(a few among the hundreds)**

Dr. Jagat Mohini with serious head injury, broken teeth and jaw-bones,
unconscious in Rattan Rani Hospital

Miss Shaukat Ara soaked in blood with a number of bones broken, hovering
between life and death in S. M. H. S. Hospital





**Begum Asra of Akahal with fractured limbs¹ in a dazed state in
S. M. H. S. Hospital**

**Mohammed Yusuf Wani with wounded head and disfigured face; maimed
for life being treated in S. M. H. S. Hospital**





Some harassed men, women and children out of thousands who were forced to flee from their homes in post-election days and took shelter in Islamia School and other places of safety

One out of 123 buses belonging to KMDA damaged by goondas; the injured driver stands along with it



people were able to elect their representatives to the State Assembly according to their own free will."

What heartening assurances were these given by the two men vitally concerned at the time with forging the destiny of the six million people of Jammu and Kashmir. But, alas, as the election drama began and scene after scene was enacted these proved to be mere words without meaning. It is difficult to say today whether or not Governor Jha and Adviser Banerji were sincere in making these solemn promises but as will be shown presently, in the days to come one by one the assurances were torn to shreds. Whether it was due to some understanding with Abdullah as was widely alleged during the days of heated contest or because the appointment of second adviser was accepted as a challenge by Jha and Banerji will never be known, but it is still complained that neither of them stood by the pious pledges they had given at the outset. The allegations against Jha and Banerji came to the surface when Ali Mohammad Tariq, former Minister of State, who stood as an independent candidate against the Sheikh in the Ganderbal constituency, called upon Jha to make public the contents of a deal which he alleged had been entered into by the Sheikh with some big business houses. Tariq wanted to know why the Land Grants Act (Amendment) Ordinance was assented to by the Governor in the teeth of stiff public opposition in the State. It is true, an official spokesman repudiated the allegation that L.K. Jha was involved in any negotiations of the Abdullah Government with any business house but the statement and the counter-statement gave an inkling into the fears and suspicious which tossed the minds of the people. The charges of partisanship surfaced and critics became vociferous with passage of time focussing attention on pro-National Conference policy of the Governor and his Adviser.

To offset the adverse effect of the commonly held belief that Governor and Sheikh were hand in glove to deprive the people of their democratic right of free vote because of their private understanding on various matters, a controversy which was believed to be fake, was waged by the two in public. On May 13, Sheikh accused Jha with being partial to Janata Party in allotting Forest Lodge, a government building, to set up Janata

headquarters and in transferring government officials under pressure. The Sheikh also took exception to the arrest of some of his party workers and said that while National Conference workers are being arrested the followers of Mir Waiz who had indulged in stone throwing at an Auqaf building were allowed to go scot free. The Governor had no difficulty in proving the hollowness of these charges which were flimsy, frivolous and baseless. For instance, regarding arrests it was easily shown that in March and April arrests had been made for creating disorder. Out of those held 68 accused belonged to the Awami Action Committee (Mir Waiz's Party) and 65 to the National Conference. As regards giving a government building temporarily to Janata Party on usual rent, it was pointed out by the Governor that a number of government houses had been given in New Delhi and other places to political parties including the Congress and National Conference.¹ Abdullah had a palatial house in New Delhi allotted by the Government a decade ago on nominal rent which he no longer needed but had continued to keep it in his possession.

The aim of both the parties, Jha and Abdullah, in resorting to the correspondence, was to remove the impression of having any understanding between the two and of its effect on the process of election which exercised the minds of State people.

Nevertheless, the fears and doubts remained unallayed until the end and proved to be genuine with passage of every day. The cat was let out of the bag by Abdullah himself when after the elections were over and he was invited by Governor Jha to take oath of office at Raj Bhavan on July 9. Thanking the Governor, the Sheikh said : "I assure you on my behalf and on behalf of my colleagues that you shall have the same unstinted support and confidence which we had in the past". Then followed the confession of a protege and a pal : In an obvious reference, wrote the staff correspondent of the *Times of India*, to his recent exchange of letters with the Governor, the Sheikh said : "Everything is fair in love and war. But now I assure you that we shall behave as good boys and not give you any cause for complaints". Immediately after the oath-taking ceremony,

¹*Times of India*, May 20, 1977.

Abdullah expressed gratitude to Jha on his own behalf and on behalf of the State people for the efficiency with which he had carried on the onerous responsibilities of the administration during the period of Governor's rule. The Sheikh said he had heard rumours that Jha was wanting to leave the State and expressed the hope that he would remain there. The Sheikh assured Jha that he had endeared himself to the people of the State by the way he had guided the administration in tackling their problems.¹ "Since the Kashmir Accord of February 1975", wrote the *Indian Express* correspondent, "under which Sheikh Abdullah gravitated to power for the first time after 1953, he had been repeatedly praising Mr. Jha for his services to the State, particularly in guiding the formulation and implementation of the policies of economic development in Jammu and Kashmir".² Thus neither the hireling heroics of Abdullah nor the partisanship of Governor Jha could be concealed forever.

At critical times the Governor could hardly restrain himself from demonstrating his partiality towards Abdullah. Such, for example, was the occasion when the Sheikh pretended to suffer from a serious heart attack. Jha promptly called on him and despatched alarming reports about the grave condition of the "patient" prompting Prime Minister Desai to send a message of sympathy which he is believed to have later regretted when he came to know the fact. Jha even persuaded the military commanders to act improperly against the best Army traditions of neutrality in politics by putting an Air Force helicopter at the disposal of Begum Abdullah to fly her from the recesses of Doda district where she was engaged in electioneering for National Conference candidates, to Srinagar. It was done not only to make it possible for the Begum to be by the bedside of her "dying" husband but also to deepen the gravity of the situation.

In contrast, Governor Jha maintained complete and inexcusable silence when three Janata leaders were savagely attacked by hooligans outside Abdullah's house. He did not express a word of sympathy with the victims who escaped assassination by a hair's breadth; he did not care to inform the Union

¹*Times of India*, July 10, 1977.

²*Indian Express*, July 11, 1977.

Government as confessed subsequently by the Prime Minister nor did he order arrest of the criminals or even an inquiry into the incident which took place in broad day light.

Another adviser to the Governor, K.T. Satarwala, was appointed by the Government of India on April 29. He was a man of affable nature and polished manners. A former member of IAS, he had previously served in similar positions to three governors in different states and was therefore taken as an expert in the matter. But he was entirely new to the Kashmir State and though he visited every town and district to meet people in general and have personal contacts and discussions with political workers of all parties, he could not understand the currents and cross-currents of State politics in the very brief time of a month or so at his disposal. He had to depend heavily on the opinions of Jha and Banerji who did not and could not give him an objective picture of the situation nor guide him on right lines to successfully discharge the grave and historic responsibility with which he was entrusted.

The Janata Ad Hoc Committee members and their allies were divided about the estimation of genuineness of the assurances given by Governor Jha and Adviser Banerji. Some of them entirely lacked confidence in both; though others were not sure that any trust could be placed in them, they considered it advisable not to antagonize them. When the Kashmir region Ad Hoc Committee of Janata Party met on April 29 at Ganderbal, a resolution was adopted complaining against the partisanship of the administration and a delegation was nominated under leadership of Ghulam Mohiuddin Karra to wait upon the Governor with a memorandum of complaints requesting him to replace notorious officers by men of known integrity and impartiality. But such was the intensity of the distrust in the Governor that Karra could never bring himself to lead the delegation and meet Jha. Karra, however, went to New Delhi and, on May 4, met Prime Minister Morarji Desai and "drew his attention to the partisan attitude of some officials in key positions in the State and stressed the need for the administration to be manned by honest and impartial officials to ensure free

and fair elections".¹

The Governor took calculated steps to effect transfers in the personnel of the administration particularly in police force but they were not unexpectedly unsatisfactory because more regard was paid in the move to safeguard the interests and fulfil the wishes of National Conference Party and appease Abdullah than leaders of the other parties. "The Janata Party and the Awami Action Committee," reported Samachar on May 15, "are not satisfied with the administrative steps taken by the Governor to ensure that the assembly elections are held in a free and fair manner. The chairman of the Awami Action Committee, Mirwaiz Mohammad Farooq expressed the view that even the poll timing suggested by the Governor was not suitable".

As the days passed swiftly by hooliganism of the National Conference, overlooked and even encouraged by a number of police officers and connived at by members of the administration in key positions, became a common and distressing observance. Jha usually turned deaf ear to complaints and refused to intervene; he pretended that there was no truth in the complaints.

One important question which called for immediate and earnest attention of Governor Jha's administration was gerrymandering and recasting of electoral rolls to which Abdullah had resorted in the days he headed the administration. By misuse of power during two years of their rule, National Conference leaders had reshaped the assembly constituencies where they found opponents in large majority. They had particularly altered the boundaries of the constituencies in Srinagar district and misshaped them to their advantage; they had also removed names of thousands of voters from electoral rolls who were known to support opposition. When this fact came to notice in early May, Janata leaders and the affected voters protested and appealed to the authorities to redress the wrongs done but to no purpose.

When after the announcement of the list of National Conference candidates in a public meeting on May 23, Abdullah made an anti-India speech exciting religious passions of the

¹*The Times of India*, May 5, 1977.

Muslims, rowdyism received a shot in the arm. There were clashes in Srinagar and the countryside at various places. Janata men were beaten, their homes and party offices raided. Protest telegrams were despatched to the Governor in scores from all the affected parts in the Valley to intervene and protect peaceful citizens from the ruffians and law-breakers but the highest dignitary sat imperturbable and took no action to restore tranquillity or defend those who had been mobbed or brutally assaulted. Jha invariably accepted the version of National Conference men that the reports of the Janata workers were either unfounded or highly exaggerated.

Two results inevitably followed when it became widely known that the Governor was not at all serious to "put down hooligan elements with an iron hand" as he had assured in his broadcast from Kashmir Radio: Miscreants made rounds with impunity in broad daylight and on public thoroughfares striking terror in the minds of people; the officials who were in the beginning neutral either conscientiously or through timidity joined the band of those in official service who had been shown undue favours during the two years of National Conference rule and had therefore decided to support the party and help Abdullah capture power. The attitude of Governor Jha emboldened the partisan officials and further undermined the moral standing of the administration if there was any previously, to the bafflement of Janata Party and its allies.

Because of the poor opinion about Jha and Banerji held by the Kashmir Janata leaders they held aloof and did not care to meet K.T. Satarwala for nearly a month after his arrival in Srinagar. They bracketed him with the other two as a limb of the same partisan administration and therefore of little use to democrats. I feared it was a counsel of despair and apt to harm Janata interests and persuaded my colleagues to see reason. On May 26, along with Karra, I met Satarwala at his residence. We held a frank and heart to heart talk on many problems which we brought to his notice among them the important two being the mounting goondaism of the National Conference and the partisan attitude of the administration. Satarwala was receptive and listened patiently to what we had to say and it appeared to me that the information gathered by him from

other sources confirmed our complaints. He assured prompt and strong action to set the matters right. We got the impression that we had at last one man in the administration equipped with effective power and enjoying the Central Government's authority and confidence, who would cope with the much deteriorated situation and create a climate in the State in which free elections could be held.

Satarwala took copious notes of the talks and as we learned later, he visited most of the places where we had told him hooliganism prevailed and warned the concerned police officials to be vigilant and alert, and stiff towards lawbreakers. He was energetic and acted promptly whenever convinced of the substance in a point raised by an interviewer. He kept himself posted with current happenings and hastened to be present at any spot where an unusual accident took place. His prime desire was to get elections held fairly, fearlessly and in a peaceful atmosphere for which he had been deputed.

Believing that Satarwala could be helpful in establishing democratic norms in State politics and in holding free elections for the first time in thirty years, Janata men met him frequently. Letters were sent to him giving accounts of events from the Janata angle, and suggesting measures to maintain calm in the Valley. He did not overlook the fact that Janata was after all only one party out of many, contesting the elections but gave fullest consideration to what Janata had to say. Some aggrieved victims of hooliganism, both men and women, also met Satarwala and described their plight and showed injuries inflicted on them, to him. Wherever and whenever he could, he took action to bring the culprits to book but he was very cautious to see that no party was offended or had any legitimate cause for complaint.

For about a month Satarwala was not convinced that National Conference aimed to win the elections through intimidation and terror, suppression of peaceful citizenry and by fraud and creation of chaos. But when on June 8, Dr. Jagat Mohini was assaulted and three days later over a hundred men and women belonging to Mir Waiz's party were injured, some of them seriously, on way to and fro Anantnag, he began to see through Abdullah's game. The depredations of the National

Conference workers on their way from Baramulla to Srinagar and on their crusade to Chrar Sheriff subsequently removed doubts, if any were still lingering in his mind, that there could be no hope of holding fair polls if ruffians were left uncontrolled. Calling a meeting of high police officials, Satarwala gave instructions to arrest notorious goondas and convicted criminals who had been pressed into service by the National Conference.

The well considered step restored tranquillity and mollified peaceful citizens but brought Satarwala head on clash with Governor Jha and Adviser Banerji. There are reasons to believe that there was stiff opposition to Satarwala in adopting these steps. Satarwala desired to uproot hooliganism from State politics and bring each and every disturber of law to book. But his two colleagues were not prepared to co-operate with him: first, they forced his hand from going any further and, secondly, they made him arrest a number of Janata and Mir Waiz's men also though they could not be accused of any defiance of law or assault at any rate in offence; thirdly, they impressed upon him the desirability of releasing a number of National Conference culprits for whom Abdullah, Begum Akbar Jan and National Conference General Secretary Ghulam Mohiuddin Shah had raised an uproar. In a letter of June 10, Begum wrote to Satarwala "to restrain the police from terrorism", and complained of "the strong arm tactics used by them during the last few days which had resulted in a wave of public indignation".¹

Satarwala put up a brave fight for the fruitfulness of his mission. But considering discretion better part of valour he yielded before Jha and ate the humble pie. He had to release the more terror-inspiring ruffians who were welcomed as heroes thereby enhancing the fallen prestige of the National Conference; not a single Janata prisoner was released. And G.M.D. Shah, the General Secretary of National Conference continued to bewail that over 2000 of his partymen were behind the bars though the official spokesman said that in all not more than 506 persons belonging to all parties had been taken into custody.

¹*Indian Express*, June 11, 1977.

Because the policy of weeding out undesirable elements from State politics and introducing democratic norms received a tremendous setback by interference of Jha and Banerji during June 10-15, the star of Satarwala set by middle of the month. He still continued to function vigorously as usual but became increasingly ineffective. The administrative setup from top to bottom came to know of his fall and his writ did not run; on election days it remained confined to his residence or his office in the Secretariat.

I met Satarwala for the last time on June 27 at 12.30 p.m. and even knowing that I was hoping against hope, I unburdened a bundle of complaints against rising hoodlum force which was now in possession of the city and many parts of the Valley. I wanted to discuss the arrangements for maintaining law and order on July 3 when polling in the Valley was to take place. He showed me his elaborate plans in this behalf which though inadequate, would have done something to contain mischief. But while in the middle of our talk I put a direct question to him about the cause of loss of his effectiveness. He was candid enough to tell me that for a fortnight his efforts had been thwarted and progress of his work retarded by his colleagues. He was unwilling to openly blame Jha but he unhesitatingly pointed the accusing finger at Banerji. I found him sad and disappointed.

Conditions deteriorated rapidly in every respect during the second half of June. National Conference leaders accentuated their anti-India propaganda and gave fillip to communalism through religious preachings; hooliganism took a virulent form; more government officials, for one reason or another, supported National Conference and a number of junior officials even spoke from the party platform; raiding of Janata offices and beating of Janata workers became a widespread daily occurrence. Even some officials in the departments under central authority joined the anti-Janata move. On June 16, a letter was sent to the Director of the Kashmir Radio pointing out the unfairness of "giving wider coverage to the news reports sent by the National Conference even when they were of insignificant nature while the reports sent by Janata Party were relegated to waste paper basket". Giving an instance of broadcasting a highly

irresponsible anti-Janata Party report in 7.30 p. m. bulletin on June 9, the letter protested : "If you or any of your subordinates has been cowed down by the threat of boycott of Radio and TV hurled by the National Conference, the way of appeasing the Party is not by bringing discredit on the Janata Party in the way you have done". Amazingly, the Director denied that the item under reference was included in the bulletin though a number of listeners confirmed that they had heard it.

The deterioration in the law and order was temporarily arrested by warnings issued by central ministers who toured the State in the third and fourth weeks of June. But hooliganism knew no bounds in the closing days of the month. It reappeared with added vehemence and virulence.

When all hope of implementation of Satarwala's measures to hold a fair election was lost, Maulana Masoodi, as a last resort, sent a telegram to Prime Minister Morarji Desai on June 30 bringing the situation to his notice. The Maulana told Morarji : "Your assurances about removal of partisan officials, complete impartiality of administration and firmness of police in dealing with hooliganism remain unfulfilled" and that "atmosphere was surcharged with religious and secessionist frenzy". The Maulana sent a copy of the telegram to Governor Jha with a covering letter. In it he protested that "had proper and strong measures been taken in wake of the visits of Union Ministers as all of them had assured us that your government is determined to do, we have no doubt that by now political life in the Valley would have returned to normalcy." The Maulana informed Jha : "We have brought facts to the notice of the Additional Inspector-General of Police and the concerned Superintendents of Police from time to time but to no purpose; instead, our active workers who form the superior cadre of our movement, including polling agents, have been put behind the bars not for any defiance of law but only because the National Conference leadership is afraid that these workers if left free can effectively mobilize numberless voters in favour of Janata". The Maulana told the Governor that "we do not seek any favours but insist on neutrality and effective functioning of your administration, impartiality of police officials and curbing of hooliganism to

make the elections free. Of this we do not find any signs in the Valley”.

The Prime Minister did not even acknowledge Maulana's telegram and the Governor gave the not unexpected stereotyped reply that “every complaint about the impartiality of any official had been promptly looked into” and “as regards your apprehensions regarding police arrangements on the polling day, I should like to assure you, that we are doing everything possible to prevent intimidation, hooliganism and capture of polling booths”.

Not satisfied with the Governor's reply, the Maulana wrote back on July 2, eve of the polling day in the Valley. The Governor was emphatically told: “Despite the claim made that the situation in Srinagar is under control, I am afraid that you are kept in the dark about the actual happenings and the methods which are employed to deal with the depredations of the hooligan elements and the callousness of the administration towards their victims. Even today a number of Janata supporters were beaten, blood was shed, homes and shops looted and property damaged while the National Conference carried out their procession through some streets of the city. Some of the wounded were brought to our office in blood-soaked clothes while some of them were sent to hospital. A number of molested women too came crying and bewailing their lot”.

Expressing deep worry about police arrangements on Sunday when polling was to take place all over the Valley, the Maulana said: “The Kashmir Police has, let it be frankly admitted, failed in the discharge of their responsibility and amply displayed that most of its members are deeply influenced by partisan politics. This is most unfortunate but can be overlooked at great risk by us”. The Maulana suggested that “the only effective measure would be to deploy entirely C.R.P. under their own officers from July 2 until the counting of votes is completed and excitement disappears”. He concluded by saying that, “the measures suggested by me alone in my opinion can allay the apprehensions of peaceful citizens though I continue to doubt if free and fair elections are possible after what has happened

during the past fortnight". No reply was received to the second letter.¹

¹Full texts of the telegram to the Prime Minister and the letters exchanged between Maulana M.S. Masoodi and Governor L.K. Jha are given as Appendix B.

Incredible Bungling

ON March 27, 1977, when the Janata Government readily accorded its assent to the recommendation of Governor Jha to dissolve the Kashmir Legislative Assembly and announced holding of fresh elections within three months, it had only one aim in view: not to allow the Congress Party to come to power in the State. Probably the Janata Party did not have any idea that it might be called upon to contest elections on its own and, in that contingency, the interval of three months would prove too insufficient to make preparations for building up a Janata unit in the State, strong enough to come out successful in the battle of the ballot.

As we know, the first attempt to set up a Janata unit before the dissolution of the Assembly, to contest elections to the Lok Sabha had proved abortive; in-fighting had killed it. Early in April the three-member delegation headed by Asoka Mehta toured the State and nominated 21-member ad hoc committee which was recognized by the central leadership on April 27 as representative of the Party. This was the start of a series of incredible bungs which ended in the debacle of Janata in the Kashmir Assembly election of 1977 and the landslide but fake victory of the National Conference.

Janata Party had no footing, no base in Kashmir when the holding of fresh elections to the State Assembly were

announced in the Lok Sabha; in the Valley it did not have even a toe-hold. If the Congress rule in the State was an anathema to the Janata leaders, the wisest course would have been to come to an understanding with Abdullah and defeat the Congress at the hustings though it would have made substantial sections of State people angry and sullen. But Abdullah's extravagant and anti-integrationist terms were unacceptable to majority of Janata leaders and it was well known that Sheikh had lost charm and popularity which he once possessed. While, however, forming the ad hoc committee the Mehta delegation made a grave miscalculation: anti-Abdullah resentment was taken as pro-Janata wave which was sweeping over Northern India at the time. Many avoidable troubles flowed from that delusion.

Among the few immoral, unwise and shortsighted measures which Jawaharlal Nehru adopted as the Prime Minister of India was acceptance of the State's accession to India without ascertaining the free will of the local people. It created a running sore which could not be healed during his lifetime. He was therefore forced to adopt a policy as undemocratic, unjust and myopic as the acceptance of accession offer. Nehru identified Abdullah with the people and believed that by installing him as the ruler of the State all would go well. But the fact is that Abdullah would have been discarded by his people if New Delhi had withdrawn political, military and financial support to him. Disagreement among Congress leaders over his arrogant attitude had thrown Sheikh out of power for 22 years (1953-1975). Reviving and pursuing her father's policy, Indira Gandhi as prime minister brought back Abdullah in 1975 as head of the State government without even caring to know the opinion of the Kashmiris.

Janata leaders had never seen eye to eye with Jawaharlal Nehru or his daughter on their Kashmir policy. Yet when they captured the Union Government they did not ponder over the grave problem nor had time to think out and evolve a healthier and more sensible and democratic policy to administer the State. Knowing that Kashmir is a delicate issue with potential international repercussions they should have lost no time to give thought to it and encouraged democratic elements to rise and assert themselves in body politic. But engrossed in

their own organizational and administrative matters they paid no heed to bleeding Kashmir. They dealt with the problem from day to day as circumstances arose and made a mess of it. Kashmir was treated like any other state which was bound to give rise to many apprehensions and complications.

Believing that Janata wielded enormous prestige in the State including the Valley, Mehta delegation made arbitrary choice of members for the Ad Hoc Committee in the sincere hope that it will be able to function smoothly. The selection of Maulana Masoodi as the convener of the committee was the best. Indeed, one can say that to successfully persuade the retired, frail and self-effacing man to re-emerge in the political field was a small miracle. But to foist upon him a band of disunited workers, some of them irreconcilable, was neither fair nor expedient. The sagacious course would have been to leave the selection of the members to him and accept his nominations. Since this was not done the Ad Hoc Committee carried the seeds of destruction within itself. Most of the time of the Committee was wasted in fighting in both the regions of Jammu and Kashmir until the days of election.

It should have been obvious to the meanest understanding that only by a magic wand could a new political body be built up from grassroots, a devoted cadre of workers assembled and election machinery geared, within the fantastically small period of two months to achieve success at the polls against such rival parties like National Conference and Congress which had been in the field for decades and held governmental power by turns since 1947. The Constitution provided a period of six months after dissolution of the assembly to hold fresh elections and, therefore, with the decision of the formation of the Janata unit the maximum time should have been allowed for preparations; no contravention of any constitutional provision or moral laxity would be involved in amending the official announcement in Lok Sabha that the elections would take place within three months from the date of dissolution of the Assembly.

The Ad Hoc Committee started from a scratch; it had no men, no material, no money to run the gigantic show it was required to set up for coming out with flying colours in the struggle against well entrenched totalitarian and dictatorial

forces in the State. As if the formation of Ad Hoc Committee was the be-all and end-all of the central leadership and as if there was unlimited time at their disposal to deal with innumerable questions confronting the unit, nothing was heard for many days and weeks from New Delhi after the departure of Mehta delegation. Every minute was precious; while ironing out differences and resolving disagreements among themselves the Ad Hoc Committee members, functioning as the executive of the Unit, lost patience. On May 4, G.M.D. Karra flew to New Delhi to apprise the central leadership of the unhappiness of his colleagues and the hopelessness of the situation; he returned with a bagful of assurances but little substantial help.

In the beginning of May, Union Government took a momentous decision to dissolve the legislatures in eight states in north and east India where the Congress Party still held the reins of office though it had been put to rout in Parliamentary elections in these areas. No wonder the Janata Party got deeply engrossed in the elections which followed the dissolution and no attention could be paid to Kashmir case, however urgent and pressing it would seem to the Ad Hoc Committee. In the circumstances it afforded some satisfaction to hear that while appointing observers for all the states going to the polls, Krishna Kant, an old veteran of freedom struggle and famous for his progressive views, had been named for Jammu and Kashmir.

Anxiously awaiting his arrival, the Ad Hoc Committee felt dismayed to find that the observer took his job leisurely and would not come until May 26 despite the members' insistent demand that he should be among them early for consultation and assistance.

The Committee entertained great hopes in Krishna Kant's liaison between it and the central leadership. It looked towards him for the solution of small and big problems which would crop up from time to time. It was expected that he would spend most of his time in the State, particularly in the Valley, meeting Janata men, appreciating their difficulties and learning the viewpoints of individual members of the Committee. But one after the other expectation was belied and the Committee stood disillusioned.

Finding to their dismay that Krishna Kant was in no hurry

to come to Kashmir and apply his talent and energy to fulfil the obligations of the observer in a befitting manner. Maulana Masoodi, seeking advice of his colleagues, prepared a memorial regarding requirements of the unit to contest elections, and forwarded the same with a personal letter, on May 18, to Party President, Chandra Shekhar, through a trusted lieutenant, Iftikhar Hussain Ansari. After stating party needs which were later on recognized even by the observer as quite modest the memorial concluded with these pregnant words: "The Ad Hoc Committee earnestly expects that in a week's time these requirements will be fulfilled as otherwise the movement is going to suffer heavily; our rivals in the field have geared up their organizational machineries and become extraordinarily active. They have many obvious advantages over us and it would damage our cause if for want of wherewithal we lag behind. Every day will make a difference and every hour in the struggle is precious and counts. Any avoidable delay will give a setback to the Janata movement in the State; we stress that the stark reality should not be overlooked".

Neither the letter was acknowledged by Chandra Shekhar nor was any action taken on the memorial for many days. When Krishna Kant arrived for the first time on May 26 and Maulana enquired about the fate of the memorial, he expressed complete ignorance about it. Kant was given a copy and impressed with the desirability of getting the requirements fulfilled without further delay. He shuttled between Srinagar and New Delhi assuring the Maulana that action had been taken but nothing was actually done until June 11 when electioneering was in full swing and both National Conference and Congress had advanced a great deal leaving the Janata Party far behind.

Eventually the requirements laid down in the memorial were substantially, though haltingly, met by the central office but every thing arrived in Kashmir too late when the time for its usefulness and utility had passed; the propaganda literature—posters, pamphlets, badges, streamers, placards, etc—came in huge bundles in the third week of June; most of them were in Hindi script unfit for use in the Valley. The jeeps which could have proved of immense help for travelling in the farflung and

mountainous areas, and for doing propaganda and giving publicity to Janata aims, arrived as late as June 24, only a week before the day of elections. It is no surprise that the State Janata leaders no less than the candidates felt disheartened and lost hope of success witnessing the hurricane tours and immensity of anti-Janata demonstrations conducted by their rivals.

Abdullah fell ill on June 13. At the suggestion of Governor L.K. Jha, Union Ministers sent messages to the "sick" man expressing good wishes and prayers for restoration of his health. Prime Minister Morarji Desai was made to spare a few minutes out of his busy engagements in London to express his concern to the consternation of State Janata leaders.

It did not rest with the messages disconcerting as they were. Evidently, Governor Jha persuaded Army Chiefs that they too should do their bit in the "national" task. One after another two top-ranking generals met Begum Abdullah at her residence with bouquets of flowers paying obeisance to the "ailing hero" not only on their behalf but also, "on behalf of rank and file of the armed forces", as they put it. No wonder a stream of central and local officials besides Dr. Karan Singh accompanied by his wife, Yashoraj Laxmi, Mohammad Yunus, a close associate of Indira Gandhi, and others followed. Hundreds of telegrams poured into the residence of the Sheikh.

What more did the leaders of the National Conference need to further the ends of their electioneering by making it known that their hero was gasping on his death bed? For the first time in his public career after independence he had been deservedly neglected by the leaders of the Union Government which would have inevitably brought about his doom. The timely ruse of serious illness played with active support of Governor Jha had surely reinforced him and his party to the detriment of Janata and democratic elements. It was a tactful move and an earnest of the success to follow on the election day.

The Ad Hoc Committee members were deeply perturbed at the tactical blunder of Prime Minister Morarji Desai and External Affairs Minister A.B. Vajpayee in having despatched ill-conceived messages to Sheikh when the State was in the midst of a crucial election and the National Conference, an unscrupulous rival party, would not fail to derive maximum

advantage out of them. Maulana Masoodi forthwith addressed strong protests to both the ministers on June 15 pointing out the adverse consequences that the messages despatched on humanitarian grounds were sure to result in weakening the position of the Janata in the State.

It was curious and regrettable that while the two Ministers did not say a word in condemnation of the murderous attack made on three Janata leaders by National Conference hoodlums outside Sheikh's house on June 13, nor did they dispatch any message of sympathy, not a day was lost in expressing and sending good wishes to Sheikh for early recovery. Beyond doubt it was a fatuous and untimely move on the part of the Union Ministers to which rightly objection was taken by Maulana Masoodi and his colleagues.

Maulana Masoodi also addressed a telegram on June 16 to Jagjivan Ram, Defence Minister, protesting against the uncalled for action of the top-ranking Army generals who paid court to the "sick" man.

In early June an election manifesto was prepared by the election committee. Besides elaborating Janata aims in fighting election, it effectively dealt with the points raised by rival parties, particularly the National Conference, to discredit the Ad Hoc Committee. It explained the historical significance of the Janata movement and objectives it had set up for the progress and happiness of the people in Jammu and Kashmir. In lucid, precise but comprehensive terms the manifesto described the future programme and plan of the party. Since the National Conference had issued its manifesto earlier on May 23, the importance of issuing Janata manifesto could not be exaggerated; there was a pressing demand for it from all the candidates whom the voters had been asking everywhere to let them know what the Janata Party intended to do if invested with power. The draft of the manifesto was scrutinized by every member of the election committee; alterations, amendments, deletions, and additions were effected to it at the instance of the members; it was finally passed and its two versions in English and Urdu were printed. When 15 thousand copies were ready for publication, Krishna Kant objected to its distribution without securing the permission of the central election body.

Krishna Kant took a copy of the election manifesto assuring to have it approved by Central Election Board. Not till the day of elections did the approval come, the reminders from Maulana notwithstanding. In desperation the publicity wing of Kashmir Janata distributed the printed copies of the manifesto but only when it was too late and of little use. It was the opinion of the candidates that had the manifesto been in the hands of voters only a fortnight earlier it would have made a difference in the outcome of the election.

It was not an easy task for the election committee to choose candidates to contest on behalf of Janata. There was no dearth of applicants because the party still continued to carry weight and have importance in the eyes of the people. The committee had to consider a number of points to balance the demands of the Muslim and non-Muslim population in Kashmir and Jammu regions. It was a taxing, vexing and exasperating job, but after sitting continuously for five days and boldly confronting innumerable issues raised inside and outside the committee, the task was successfully accomplished and a list of 74 names finalized. On June 2, Krishna Kant took it for getting approved by the Central Board. But, characteristically, he did not display any anxiety to hasten up; to him time was of no essence and the advance of rival parties of no consequence. He had reasons to feel dissatisfied with the nomination of candidates from Jammu region because some applicants known to hold extremist communal views had been dropped. Jan Sangh faction in the Central Janata leadership gave a hearing to some rejected candidates which caused delay in the approval of the list.

Much had by now happened to make Maulana Masoodi unhappy, and as a last resort, he decided on June 15 to give vent to his feelings in two personal letters he addressed to Asoka Mehta and Morarji Desai. "No body knows it better than you that due to my old age and ill health," he wrote to the former, "I took up most reluctantly the onerous task of organizing the J&K Janata unit on the clear understanding that the Central Party will co-operate with me in every manner. To my dismay I find that the assistance I had expected to receive is not forthcoming and it is becoming increasingly difficult for me and my colleagues to shoulder the responsibility of successfully

leading the Kashmir Unit". The Maulana enumerated the problems facing him and his colleagues in the letter and concluded it by impressing upon Asoka Mehta the unenviable position in which he had been put by the three-man committee headed by him.¹

In a similar communication, Maulana told Morarji that old age and ill-health forbade him to shoulder the responsibility of building up the Janata organization in the State and preparing the party to contest the elections but "the persuasion of Shri Asoka Mehta and other friends became irresistible and I yielded". Regretting that "the co-operation (of the central party) is not forthcoming in the measure in which it was expected" the Maulana demanded that requirements of the Ad Hoc Committee be fulfilled, election manifesto approved and the list of candidates passed as it was adopted by the election committee.² It is the measure of indifference and negligence on the part of central leadership that neither Asoka Mehta nor Morarji Desai gave any reply to the Maulana. The Prime Minister, however, displayed uncommon and singular farsightedness in putting his foot down and insisting on acceptance of the list as prepared by the Kashmir Election Committee in its entirety. On June 18, he telephoned Maulana to apprise him of his decision.

From June 19 to 27, Morarji Desai, and three Union Ministers—Choudhry Charan Singh, Jagjivan Ram and Sikander Bhakt—one after another, visited the State and delivered public speeches in various towns and the two cities of Jammu and Srinagar. Everywhere the gatherings were big, at times unknown to living memory, partly because of the personality of the speakers but mostly due to the fact that imagination of the people had been caught by the Janata objectives to demolish totalitarianism and dictatorship established by self-seeking political adventurers for three decades. People yearned for clean administration free of corruption and nepotism. In their candid, forceful and forthright speeches the ministers did not belie the hopes but only strengthened them.

The Ad Hoc Committee of Kashmir region had talks with

¹See Appendix C.

²See Appendix D.

Home Minister Charan Singh on June 19, with Defence Minister Jagjivan Ram on June 21, and with Prime Minister Morarji Desai on June 25.

The Home Minister heard the Janata leaders one by one, noted the difficulties they had to face and the suggestions they made to face them. Transfer of partisan officials and suppression of hooliganism were the main demands. Charan Singh agreed that the elections should be postponed by 10 days or so. His blunt replies to the National Conference delegation and Press correspondents on June 20 made a reassuring reading.

When the Ad Hoc Committee members met Defence Minister Jagjivan Ram on June 21 in the evening, it was amazing to hear him confess that he did not know how and why two generals of the Indian Army should have called upon Sheikh Abdullah to express concern at his illness. Jagjivan Ram was as profuse in giving assurances of removing the difficulties as Charan Singh.

"Whatever complaints you may have," assured Charan Singh addressing the public meeting on June 19, "about law and order problem and of police partisanship, will disappear from tomorrow".¹ Amidst thunderous applause in a huge crowd, Jagjivan Ram said Abdullah was a beloved leader but had become a heart patient. "You should pray for his long life, but also create conditions where it will become necessary for him to take rest. That you could easily do by denying your vote to him and enable the Janata Party to form government here".²

In a statement on June 23 Abdullah termed the speeches of the ministers as "a dark and sinister conspiracy being hatched against him" and complained that "he was disappointed that during their visit no minister felt inclined to as much as call on him ailing as he was". He described the speeches as "hostile propaganda" and "a campaign of abuse, vilification, slander and character assassination".³ Thereby completely identifying himself with the hooligans against whom the speeches of the ministers were mainly directed.

¹*Statesman*, June 20, 1977.

²*Ibid.*, June 22, 1977.

³*Ibid.*, June 24, 1977.

The star performer of the Janata election show was Prime Minister Morarji Desai who arrived in the State on June 25. At his request the reception was simple. Even so, from the Srinagar airport he was taken in a procession through the main streets of the city to the Raj Bhawan at Chashma Shahi; the route was gorgeously decorated by arches and buntings displaying Janata slogans on numberless placards; cheering crowds waved to Desai a hearty welcome on both sides of the roads.

Since ring leaders of ruffians had been thrown into prison and the show was held without Sheikh figuring in it and National Conference men sulking at home with their rivals having the field day, it must have been demoralizing to the leadership and disheartening for their followers.

Morarji made an extensive tour of the Valley and addressed gatherings at Kupwara, Pattan, Baramulla, Shopian, Anantnag, Handwara, Bandipura and Srinagar. The main theme of his lectures was that the people of Kashmir should steal their will and determination to fight fear and domination.¹ He said that all arrangements necessary for enabling the people to vote freely would be made. He assured that anyone trying to interfere in this process would be punished.²

Available members of the Ad Hoc Committee of Janata Party had a one and half hours meeting with Morarji Desai at Raj Bhawan on June 25. It started on a wrong note when Karra encouraged by the talk with the Home Minister Charan Singh, pleaded for postponement of election day. The Prime Minister was deadly opposed to it and displayed irritation when Karra insisted on it. Thereafter the meeting did not go well. Though Desai repeatedly enquired about the difficulties he did not exercise patience to hear any member till he had finished. He would cut him short and inflict a lecture from his "vast and varied" experiences. Self-righteousness was his forte and it seemed that he was always right and did what was proper. He stuck tenaciously to his deep-rooted fads. When someone complained against the attitude of Governor Jha towards Kashmir Janata he replied with a glint of self-satisfac-

¹*Statesman*, June 26, 1977.

²*Hindustan Times*, June 26, 1977.

tion: "Jha has worked as my secretary and I know he is thoroughly reliable". There the matter, in his opinion, should end. Everyone was astounded to hear the Prime Minister expressing ignorance about the attempted assassination of three Janata leaders outside Sheikh Abdullah's house when a member asked Desai why he did not care to make a public statement over the incident denouncing the attack when he was so hasty in sending a message of sympathy from London to Abdullah who feigned illness.

When his attention was drawn to the hostile propaganda spread by enemies that Janata is not secular but Hindu communalist in character, Morarji Desai boastfully said that long ago he had publicly confessed that he discarded *janyow* (sacred thread worn by upper caste men among Hindus) because he stood above the distinctions of creed and caste. How could then he or Janata be accused of communalism or of entertaining Hindu prejudices or any bias against Muslims?

The misdeeds of Abdullah and his minions were being brought to the notice of the Prime Minister when he intervened to say that he knew the Sheikh thoroughly well from the early forties and there was no need to expatiate on the subject. He entertained no doubts that the Sheikh did not deserve the position to which he was raised.

A.G. Lone and Iftikhar Hussain Ansari laid stress on the various difficulties and problems which Ad Hoc Committee had to encounter partly due to partisan administration and partly because the central leaders were sluggish in dealing with the requirements of the Kashmir Unit. Some outspoken remarks irritated Morarji who exclaimed: "We faced bigger problems and tougher difficulties when we were released after long incarceration in February last. Yet within weeks we could organise people all over the country and with their help demolish the totalitarian setup and successfully resurrect Indian democracy from the ashes. You should not hold others responsible for your own weaknesses".

In his annoyance Morarji lost composure and removing the spotless white Gandhi cap from his head, mildly admonished the Ad Hoc Committee members for not drawing a lesson from the Janata Party's heroic struggle against heavy odds. Lone and

Ansari, supported by colleagues, tried to rebut the charge pointing out the difference in the two cases but were silenced and had to leave the rejoinder unfinished. Even Maulana Masoodi's soft and inoffensive words grated on Prime Minister's ears. Yet, amusingly enough, Morarji repeatedly stressed that he wanted to know the difficulties that the Kashmir Party faced and he was prepared to remove them.

Morarji, however, softened towards the end and conceded certain points: The State government should deal unsparingly with goondaism; those officials who lack sense of responsibility should be removed from key-posts and partisan officers should be suspended and punished. When some of the government functionaries were named in the meeting as backing the National Conference the Prime Minister assured the Committee that immediate action would be taken against them.

On June 27 in the morning when we went to bid him good-bye, Morarji informed me that a delegation of Pandits had waited on him and complained bitterly against my ideas and activities. I explained that it was because I had done more than throw away my sacred thread to get myself rid of religious and caste prejudices. He did not catch the significance of what I said. He was in a hurry as usual. The Maulana who accompanied him to the helipad later told me that Morarji was much exercised by the political philosophy I propounded. "I do not consider a communist as harmful as an atheist," the Prime Minister was reported to have held.

Mercifully neither the Prime Minister nor anyone of his other three colleagues called at Abdullah's residence for which the "sick" man made a grievance in a letter to Morarji. But even a greater blow was dealt at the National Conference dictator. Unexpectedly, Morarji Desai, without consulting Ad Hoc Committee or even Maulana Masoodi, accepted an invitation to a dinner at Mirwaiz's residence on June 26. The staff correspondent of the *Times of India* reported: "The dinner engagement of the Prime Minister, Mr. Morarji Desai, with Mirwaiz Maulvi Farooq, chairman of the Awami Action Committee, which has extended full support to the Janata Party in the coming elections, has provoked strong protest by the National Conference. Mr. Ghulam Mohiuddin Shah, led a deputation to the Governor

Mr. L.K. Jha, to protest against Mr. Desai's visit to Maulana Farooq's house in the interior during his visit to Kashmir".¹

The dinner engagement was the culmination of the electioneering campaign against Janata rivals and fortified the hope that the days of hooliganism and terrorization had come to an end and everyone could expect to have free and fair polls. S. Viswam, special correspondent of the *Statesman* reported on June 27 that "the election prospects of the Janata Party can now be said to have improved, marginally in some and substantially in many constituencies". Among the factors which had contributed to this development, Viswam enumerated "the improvement in the law and order situation following police vigilance" and "demoralization in (National Conference) party ranks due to arrest of its workers".

Conflicting reports were received from different quarters of the prospects of Janata Party in the elections, both optimistic and pessimistic. The results were unpredictable. If the elections were free and fair it was not extravagant to hope that Janata might be able to capture 15 to 20 seats in the Valley.

With their triumph over Indira Gandhi's dictatorship fresh in their minds, joyous at the enthusiasm of the mammoth crowds which welcomed them everywhere in Jammu and Kashmir and with confidence that their orders were bound to be obeyed, Union Ministers were sure they had done a good job. Jagjivan Ram and Morarji Desai declared "Kashmir Janata will win the elections." But the fact remained that they neither understood nor cared to understand the Kashmir affairs; they believed this was just like any other state which it is neither administratively, emotionally, politically nor culturally. By dealing half heartedly and in an off-hand manner with the situation, the ministers had incredibly bungled. The improvement in law and order situation proved ephemeral, the assurances of the ministers illusory. Only for five days (June 23 to 28) there was comparatively calm in the Valley when the officials worked under forced honesty and impartiality produced by the warnings of the ministers administered publicly and probably also in private when a number of big officials met them.

¹*Times of India*, June 27, 1977.

Since no drastic action was taken against anyone of the errant officials and since Governor Jha and Adviser Banerji were lenient towards the partisans of the Sheikh and hoodlum bands of the National Conference, terror re-erupted with redoubled force from the evening of June 28.

A mass procession was brought out by Janata supporters on June 30 to counteract and remove fear from the minds of the voters. It ended at Polo Ground where no less than fifty thousand people gathered to hear Maulana Masoodi and Mirwaiz Farooq. Observer Krishna Kant, who accompanied the procession was also present. The procession and the meeting passed off peacefully and was successful in achieving its objective.

But the next day the National Conference to offset its effects, brought out a procession from Mujahid Manzil; it consisted hardly of fifteen thousand persons, but true to the party character, the processionists on their way to Gandhi Grounds, attacked Janata offices, hauled down its flags and buntings, and manhandled Janata men and workers wherever they encountered them. It served a green signal to ruffians to openly come out and regenerate the atmosphere of terror.

13

Black July Three : the Day of Terror

"During the election the polling booths were not properly guarded. Instances of capturing polling booths have been confirmed."

Sunday, Calcutta, July 24, 1977.

THE elections to the State Legislative Assembly were scheduled to be held on two days: In the Jammu region on June 30, and in the Kashmir Valley and Ladakh on July 3.

As a reaction to the outspoken and rabid Muslim communalism of National Conference, Hindus in Jammu region were deeply agitated which helped extremists among Jan Sanghis to become popular. Eleven such members of the Janata Party in the region who had been refused tickets rebelled and contested as independents. Reports were received of sabotage and collusion of a number of Janata workers with Congress which was deplorable. But on the whole the polls on June 30 were peaceful all over the region except in the hilly districts of Rajouri and Doda where Muslims are in majority and National Conference was able to exert pressure through appeal to religious passion and intimidation. Janata candidates from these areas sent telegrams and made phone calls imploring authori-

ties and Janata leadership to intervene but to their dismay no relief could be rendered.

Polling in Kashmir Valley and Ladakh on July 3 was anything but peaceful. Given below is a detailed account of the incidents on the polling day as recorded in my personal diary :

8.00 A.M. Janata office has opened earlier today and many of the workers are present. Sky is overcast with clouds and it has begun to rain, but groups of people are reported to have come out and are flocking towards polling booths. We sit glued to the two telephones in the office and note down the reports as they come in.

8.30 A.M. Reports have started trickling in that strong-arm men of National Conference have already captured some polling booths. Accompanied by six colleagues, Sheikh Ali Mohammad, our candidate in Maharaj Ganj constituency, has come to say that at Aishan Sahib, Nauhata and Khanaqahi Moula his agents have been forcibly turned out with the connivance of the polling officers.

9.00 A.M. A.R. Kabli came with four workers who were attacked, one of them injured in the face by a stone (which was produced); they reported capture of a number of booths in Idgah constituency by ruffians equipped with knives, daggers and lathis threatening Janata men to vote at peril to life. Kabli says Anwar Salim's condition in Zadibal is worse.

Stone throwing on voters opposed to National Conference in Kralapora and Chadoora.

9.10 A.M. National Conference workers headed by Khaliq Khan attacked Chhatabal and Barathana booths.

9.15 A.M. At Khangroo, Hamambal, Anzimar and Radapore, National Conference workers attacked Janata men and turned them out and captured the booths.

9.17 A.M. Presiding and polling officers assisted National Conference workers to capture booths at Lar, Repore Barsu and Dagapore, allowing them to do as

they like. Janata agents have been turned out. Police did not help.

9.20 A.M. Booths at Veterinary Office, Abi Guzar, Maisuma and Dubji have been attacked by National Conference workers some of whom were women. Ghulam Hassan Kirmani, Deputy Superintendent of Police, is alleged to be encouraging hooliganism in Habba Kadal constituency at Zaindar Mohalla and Tankipora.

9.25 A.M. An organized band of volunteers of National Conference threatens Janata voters in Maisuma not to vote and stay inside homes.

9.35 A.M. Janata agents are harassed at Kawdara and Shalla Mohalla by National Conference toughs while the Police look on passively.

Masoodi contacted Governor Jha and told him that capture of booths was going on as anticipated by us. He reported the various incidents which have been brought to our notice and requested him to stop lawlessness. The Governor promised to take into the matter immediately.

9.37 A.M. From Ganderbal, Ali Mohammad Tariq telephones that goondas have captured booths at Haran, Theor, Lar, Repore and Kurhama; presiding officers are personally stamping ballot papers in place of voters and has finished them all by 9.30 A.M.

9.50 A.M. Janata agents at octroi post Ram Bagh booth harassed and disallowed to function.

9.54 A.M. Arwat booth at Fateh Kadal dominated by National Conference workers.

9.55 A.M. Bricks are thrown by National Conference hooligans at Said Kadal and Suthra Shahi mohalla booths.

9.57 A.M. Pacha, Ontoo and Peer are said to have captured Majahid Manzil booth and barred entry of every voter suspected of Janata sympathy.

At Mujahid Manzil booth Janata women voters were molested and their hair pulled out for intending to vote Janata.

- 9.58 A.M. Yacchapura, Dangarpura (Zadibal) booths captured by National Conference workers: Arwat (Fateh Kadal) booth also falls. Janata agents beaten and ousted from both places. No policemen found on duty.
- 10.00 A.M. Booths at Motiyar Central school, government girls school, Rangparistan, government girls school Jogilankar and government boys high school, Rainawari, have been captured after Janata agents were beaten and turned out notwithstanding the protest of presiding officer and policemen who appeared helpless and ineffective.
- 10.10 A.M. Government College Nawakadal: four Janata agents forced by hooligans under threat of violence to leave; appeal to presiding officer goes in vain; policemen present expressed helplessness.
- 10.12 A.M. Qalanderpura Muslim girls high school: There being no security arrangements Janata workers are unable to function and Janata men afraid to vote.
- 10.25 A.M. No policeman at Sri Bhatt Spinning Mills polling booth to ensure protection to voters. National Conference hoodlums have a field day to do as they like.
- 10.30 A.M. Reports have now begun to come from muffasil about irregularities in polling. Janata workers have come personally from Khrew, Char and Ludow to say that presiding officers in league with National Conference workers are rigging elections. Men whether eligible to vote or not are brought in trucks and made to stamp ballot papers.
- Ten Janata workers badly beaten and bruised at S.P. College booth come to the Janata office; one of them Ghulam Mohammad Zaindari with his clothes drenched in blood. By coincidence the representative of Reuters also dropped in and saw the victim of thrashing and asked him a few questions.
- 10.53 A.M. At Namchabal (Malik Angan) Janata agents have been physically thrown out and booths A, B and C

captured; impersonation goes on apace; spurious votes are being cast in presence of presiding officers and police at Doompura, Basant Bagh.

Janata agents were turned out from Sharda Peeth and Raghunath Mandir booths.

Mufti Basheer Ahmad says that at Aqil Mir, Khanyar, a ladder has been placed at the back of the polling booth to let in men to cast votes. Impersonation goes on on a large scale.

- 11.10 A.M. At Chhatabal duplicate voting papers have been detected at a booth. D.S.P. Mohammad Shaffi was informed about it but took no action.
- 11.14 A.M. In Anantnag National Conference leaders offered Rs. 15 per voter, but Janata men are steadfast in their resolve to cast votes for Janata.
- 11.20 A.M. K.L. Kaul reports from Barammulla that there has been no clash or intimidation so far and the work of voting is proceeding on peacefully.
- 11.33 A.M. A beaten and ousted Janata agent reported that at polling booths at Nowhatta Government High School, Rang Hammam and Roshan Bagh, Janata agents were driven out by force. The goondas were armed with knives. Two other booths at Malik Sahib and Jabgari Mohalla were also attacked.
- 11.50 A.M. Ghassa, who was arrested but released has terrorized voters at Abi Guzar. He was assisted by policemen and therefore Janata men desisted from casting votes out of fear.
- 12.35 P.M. At Tel Bal in Hazaratbal constituency Janata, agent was beaten and prevented from discharging his duty.
- 12.50 P.M. Janata candidate Anwar Salim was attacked and manhandled at Aqal Mir booth in Zadibal constituency.
- 1.10 P.M. In Vicharnag booth (Zadibal constituency) goondas smashed a jeep and damaged a car; Janata worker was attacked with knives and acid was thrown at him.
- 1.18 P.M. G.N. Untoo reports from Sopore that he has,

besides making a round in Sopore, visited booths at Bandipur and Sangrama constituency. The work is going on well and satisfactorily. He is optimistic about the success of Janata at Sangrama.

Agitated people come to the office telling tales of beatings and strong-arm deeds of National Conference workers connived at by presiding and polling officers together with policemen. We feel these statements are a bit exaggerated if not groundless. But when one after another injured men and women are brought in we make repeated attempts to contact Governor Jha, Adviser Satarwala, Inspector General Shah and whoever else we can find for prevention of lawlessness and violence. None is available; Police Control Room is equally of little help. The man in charge perfunctorily says : "action is being taken and a posse of police has been despatched to the spot."

1.20 P.M. Mohammad Usman reports from Lavaipura (Ganderbal) that National Conference and Janata are present everywhere in force and skirmishes are taking place. But National Conference hoodlums are mounting attack from Suzet Gouripura.

Scores of voters come to report that when they went to cast their votes they were told their votes had already been cast. A number of ladies were among the complainants.

Hakim Mohiddin reports that he went personally to Rehbab Sahib and Jamalata booths and found that conditions were such which made impossible for any Janata man or woman to vote.

1.40 P.M. In Abi Guzar National Conference workers attacked and injured Karra's daughter. She had to seek C.R.P. help because Kashmir police refused to intervene. Buland had just visited Akhara and Maisuma booths which are undefended and open to hooligans.

2.00 P.M. At Suwra booth, Nooruddin Pandit and one of his

colleagues have been attacked and injured while passing by in a jeep.

2.18 P.M. Daulatabad High School was captured by N.C. workers. Reports of impersonation and casting of false votes came every minute. No responsible man from Chief Electoral Officer's office responded to our calls.

2.50 P.M. The booth at Urdu Bazar (Mujahid Manzil) was captured by N.C. workers. The Janata agent was threatened to go away if he valued his life. After some resistance he jumped from second storey of the building to save himself. The police took into custody Mohammad Farooq, a Janata worker, for objecting to the highhandedness of N.C. workers headed by Pacha. No Janata man therefore came forward to cast vote.

3.00 P.M. At Malchamar (Ali Kadal) booth an employee of food control department found working as the agent of N. C. candidate.

3.50 P.M. The Janata agent at Mujagund found missing and the booth was captured by National Conference men.

At the booths, at National High School Narasingharh, and municipal committee in Habba Kadal constituency, the same N.C. men. cast vote a number of times because the ink marks on their fingers supposed to be indelible, have been washed off.

4.00 P.M. Congressmen led by hooligans attacked Janata candidate in Leh, made attempts at his life and his jeep was smashed.

4.15 P.M. At Malik Angan and Namachabal booths Janata voters were attacked; clothes of Pandit women were ripped because they wanted to vote for Janata.

Thousands of Pandit voters are said to have gone back to their homes without voting.

The goondas equipped with lathis came, turned out Janata agents at Ganderbal and captured

ballot-papers and cast them as they liked after making entries. Telegrams were sent to Governor and Election Commissioner protesting against rowdyism and demanding repoll.

4.40 P.M. Some parties of observers sent out to visit polling booths returned and reported that though there is no doubt rowdyism having taken place on a wide scale in the city at many booths, there has been, nevertheless, good polling and Janata men and women in large numbers have cast their votes.

4.45 P.M. While on the one hand both the telephones are ringing constantly and diverse complaints are heard from angry candidates from far and near constituencies, on the other, uncontrollable crowds pour into the office giving details of irregularities, violence and hooliganism of National Conference workers. But Janata leaders have not lost hope; they still believe that numberless men and women despite terror spread by National Conference have valiantly cast votes at the polls.

When the time for casting votes was over, all candidates from Srinagar district and their chief agents and, later in the evening, many others from the countryside dropped into the Janata office accompanied by large crowds to narrate their woeful stories. There was nothing new in their statements which was not already known to everyone of us during the day. One thing, however, was notable and common: the polling officers had refused to record the irregularities committed at the booths when requested to do so and even declined to receive complaints made in writing by the affected candidates. Many of the Janata candidates and their agents saw no alternative but to boycott the election process and leave polling booths in protest.

There were 2470 polling booths district-wise thus divided : 740 in Baramulla district, 142 in Srinagar district, 730 in Anantnag district and 220 in Ladakh district. Some of the booths were in far-flung areas of Gurez and Karnah.

It was no easy job to keep under control the rowdyism which had raised its ugly head during the month of June due to the

religious frenzy and anti-India passions excited by the National Conference leaders. Elaborate arrangements were therefore called for to make the elections fair and free. But no effective measures were taken. Satarwala assured that sufficient police force including 16000 men of C.R.P, had been imported from neighbouring states and kept in reserve to meet any emergency and every booth would be protected and voters ensured freedom while casting their votes. As a matter of fact, only 1400 policemen were on duty and almost all of them belonged to Kashmir force; the few C.R.P. men who were posted at some booths were ineffective because they were subordinated to Kashmir police officers. A number of C.R.P. men admitted there was hooliganism and even felt annoyed and distressed at the highhandedness of National Conference workers, but expressed their inability to interfere in defiance of Kashmir officers.

Why the C. R. P. was not deployed in full force in Srinagar and other places where disturbances were apprehended as Satarwala had assured the Government intended to do, will for ever remain a mystery. Probably it did not suit the scheme of Governor Jha who wanted to curry favour with the National Conference by employing pro-Abdullah Kashmir policemen to ensure defeat of the Janata Party. When questioned Satarwala only fumbled and could give no satisfactory reply why the services of C.R.P. men who had been brought in large numbers from outside were not utilized to control hooligan and lawless elements.

Next day, July 4, counting of votes started in all the constituencies throughout the State. Reports began to pour in on the telephone and by telegrams from candidates and trustworthy workers about the happenings at the polling booths and during the night : some unburdened themselves calmly but most of the informants were excited and in distress, full of anger. It was clear that what had been learned was only the tip of the iceberg most of it had remained under water to be gradually discovered.

From the hooliganism and irregularities which were in evidence at the hustings on July 3, the results of the elections were a foregone conclusion. Yet it was believed that Janata would be able to win round about 15 seats in the Valley. But when the results started to come in, Janata leaders felt staggered.

As if by some preconceived plan the failures of their big guns came first. Iftikhar fell, so did Karra and Dr. Majid; and then continuously the names of National Conference candidates were declared elected by the Kashmir Radio. The telephone rang from different places every minute conveying reports of candidates about the numerous irregularities which had been committed : broken seals of ballot boxes; ballot papers folded in lots found in the boxes : more ballot papers than the number of voters at certain booths : invalid votes credited to National Conference candidates etc. Everywhere the presiding officers refused to record the irregularities or even acknowledge in writing applications of candidates stating these facts. Many candidates thereupon withdrew from the counting table and let the presiding officers and the N.C. leaders do as they liked.

As the failure of Janata candidates and the success of N.C. candidates were announced on the Kashmir Radio there was panic in the ranks of Janata supporters. Frantic calls were made that they were in the imminent danger of being attacked by jubilant hoodlums; their houses and shops were being pelted with boulders. Janata office rang up every authority to come to the rescue of the victims but nobody cared to hear the distress calls. We tried to contact ministers and Janata leaders in New Delhi to get law and order restored but to no purpose.

A few days later, Sonam Gyalsan accompanied by Kushak Tugdan and Ghulam Rasul Bhat came from Ladakh to narrate the sad tale of rowdyism, partisanship of administration and suppression of his colleagues. It was nothing different from what took place in the Valley. Gyalsan is a law graduate and one of the small band of educated Buddhists. He does not exaggerate, is gentle, fearless, devoted and unassuming. In the assembly election he was opposed by Sonam Narbu who had served as a minister in Abdullah's cabinet.

Because National Conference is very unpopular among the Buddhists, Narbu dared not stand on its ticket. Having secretly made a pact with Abdullah he fraudulently contested on Congress mandate. He was openly supported by government officials and hired goondas. Gyalsan was thwarted at every step, even kidnapped and held in unlawful custody for a night on the eve of elections. Notorious among the officers opposing

Gyalsan was Akhbar Ladakhi who though posted elsewhere and supposed to be on duty, defied orders, came to Leh and actively canvassed for Narbu who firmly assured the officials and hooligans that no one can touch them because he was sure to be back in office. Elected to the Assembly, Narbu did not lose a day to change sides. He defected from the Congress, joined the National Conference and is now again in Abdullah's cabinet.

From July 5, a new and most painful phase of politics opened in the Valley. When it was announced that the National Conference had captured majority of seats in the Assembly, groups of rowdies armed with boulders, bricks, lathis, catapults and other missiles went round the city and towns attacking homes of defeated Janata candidates and other leaders. There was no Janata office which was left in peace; their flags, signboards, furniture and records were destroyed or consigned to fire on the roadside; property was damaged, anyone suspected of Janata leanings mobbed and injured. Under cover of merry-making and victory parade National Conference hoodlums by the hundred went from mohalla to mohalla seeking houses of Janata workers to break their windows and doors or whatever they could lay their hands on; policemen stood by watching lawlessness without even trying to prevent the so-called merry-makers from resorting to violent deeds. The officials sat in their offices unperturbed and imperturbable. The appeals for speedy measures to handle the situation brought no response. The Divisional Commissioner assured that under section 144 Cr. P.C. orders had been issued to control hooliganism wherever it appeared; but the merry-makers ignored the orders and not a single ruffian was brought to book. There was virtual anarchy in the Valley; shops were broken open and looted, houses damaged and many people whose lives were threatened had to leave their hearth and home to take shelter in safer areas, in schools or in the homes of their friends.

In the countryside the National Conference hooligans destroyed the crops in the fields of peasants who voted for Janata. According to the correspondent of the daily *Khidmat*, official organ of the Congress Party, "in Nowgam Khlatar barn

of Ghulam Rasool Hakim containing oilseeds was burned; fruit trees in his garden were cut down". When asked why he did not report it to the police Hakim retorted that "the police being partisan it was useless to do so". The correspondent stated that a high school head master and an employee of home guard participated in the criminal activity.

In Magreypura irrigation water link was cut off to the land of Sona Nayak which dried his growing paddy. In the same village the corn crop of Aziz Magrey was devastated. Imams and maulvis who voted or worked for Janata were ostricized and boycotted.¹ In Naru village of Chadoora constituency the house of Mohammad Shaban Dar, a Janata enthusiast, was consigned to fire.

In a lengthy editorial on July 7, the *Khidmat* bemoaned that "after the announcement of the election results the Kashmir administration has been paralysed and activities of lawlessness and anarchy are witnessed on a very wide scale". The correspondent of the *Sunday* (Calcutta), usually backing National Conference, reported on July 24, 1977: "The reign of terror unleashed by the National Conference workers after their victory, which went on unabated for three days, made life miserable for Kashmir Pandits; homes of Shias and Bakaras were stoned and set on fire, women were molested...and life came to a standstill in areas where Janata voters lived. For three days Bakaras and Kashmiri Pandits kept their doors locked living in terror while goondas rampaged through their mohalles". The pro-Abdullah correspondent of *Hindustan Times* wrote: "Admittedly there were cases of hooliganism in the wake of the National Conference election victory".

Not being able to move freely members of Ad Hoc Committee could not meet in full strength to take stock of the situation. However, consulting those who were at hand a statement was prepared and issued on behalf of the Committee on July 5. In it "the Jammu and Kashmir Janata Party refused to concede victory to the National Conference on the ground that the party won through intimidation, terror and rigging." The statement reminded that anticipating unfair practices by National

¹*Khidmat*, Srinagar, July 14, 1977.

Conference the Janata Party had asked Governor Jha to take steps to ensure free and fair elections but without success. "The administration had been unable to curb lawlessness and hooliganism let loose on a wide scale after the announcement of election results". The statement concluded by saying that Ad Hoc Committee would meet shortly to consider the steps to be taken "to restore democratic practices and the political rights of the people".

When lawlessness and criminal activities of National Conference workers did not abate but went on mounting day after day, it was decided, on July 7, to send a delegation to New Delhi to apprise the Central Janata leadership and Government of India of the horrifying developments which the incredible bungling of the Union Government had given rise to. I was a member of the delegation specially assigned to let the national Press know the real situation in the State.

In New Delhi the members of the delegation met central party leadership and the Union Ministers apprising them of the deteriorated political situation in the Valley. Statements were issued giving facts and figures about the developments in the State.

The National Press was responsive and wide publicity was given to what the members of the delegation said: "Mr. Prem Nath Bazaz, spokesman of the Jammu and Kashmir unit of the Janata Party," reported the *Times of India* on July 14, "has called for appointment of a high powered commission to inquire into the 'violent tactics' and 'malpractices' indulged in by National Conference workers and supporters to win the recent assembly poll. He has alleged that there was large scale intimidation of Janata supporters in the valley". The report went on to say, "Mr. Bazaz charged Sheikh Abdullah with having not only tried to whip up passions among Muslims on communal grounds but also with having revived the almost forgotten slogan of plebiscite to mobilize support for his party". "Mr. Bazaz said that though innumerable cases of goondaism were brought to the notice of the Governor, Mr. L.K. Jha, no effective steps were taken to maintain law and order".

The *Indian Express* said on July 14: "Mr. Bazaz says there was a serious challenge to the 'monopolistic leadership' of

Sheikh Abdullah from secular minded sections, most of whom comprised Muslims. . .He (Sheikh) was widely blamed for nepotism, corruption and misuse of power. . .Mr. Bazaz alleged that the Sheikh had inflamed Shia-Sunni, Hindu-Muslim and Sher-Bakara (Supporters of Sheikh and Maulvi Farooq) animosity. The Sheikh had said that the Janata was Jan Sangh in new grab."

The *Indian Express* report added: "Mr. Bazaz who was a close associate of Sheikh Abdullah when they started their political careers in the thirties, even said that Sheikh Abdullah had feigned illness".

On July 5, a startling incident took place which opened the eyes of people inside and outside the Valley. Sheikh Abdullah, certain of his return to power, threw away the mask of crippling ailment, jumped out of sick-bed, hale and hearty. Rising as suddenly as he had fallen gravely ill on June 13 when formidable opposition depressed him, he shed crocodile tears at the victims of his hooligan gangs. Acknowledging greetings of his supporters who started collecting outside his residence as news of the party victory spread, he asked them still in muffled voice to be magnanimous. The man who was reported unable to move out of his room came in a car next day to the Polo Ground where he addressed a gathering of frenzied thousands. And, lo and behold, he was by grace of God restored to health overnight. A couple of days later he, along with Afzal Beg, took oath of office at Raj Bhavan. On July 11, addressing for over 100 minutes the secretaries to the Government, he stressed the need "for maintaining peace and said that after the election people from all walks of life should return to their normal routine of life". But the activities of the Kashmir Janata leaders in Delhi upset him. "I am the acknowledged leader of the overwhelming majority of the people here", he claimed on July 14. "The centre has to deal with me". He praised Prime Minister Morarji Desai and Janata Party President Chandra Shekhar for their farsight in having recognized the victory of the National Conference at the polls. But the violence continued unabated.

The staff correspondent of the *Times of India* reported on

July 16: "In a rejoinder to Sheikh's statement on Janata Party workers campaign against his government, Mr. Bazaz says, hooligans are still active and people, especially those who worked or voted for Janata Party in the election are being harassed".¹ "Mr. Bazaz has issued a list of 22 Janata Party offices attacked or captured, 53 shops looted or shut down and 85 families who were forced to take shelter in safe localities". The *Times of India* published photographs of looted shops with policemen on guard.

"Over two lakh people voted for the Janata Party in the valley. Scores of Janata offices functioned in the 42 constituencies before the election, but none of these is allowed to exist now", Bazaz points out. "The Janata Party spokesman feels that National Conference leaders either do not mean what they say or they are unable to control the activities of their workers. Sheikh Abdullah thinks that if he praises the central Janata leadership, particularly the Prime Minister Mr. Morarji Desai, the miseries of the Kashmiris will not be taken notice of and full support will be extended to his government".

Another national daily the *Indian Express* reported, "Mr. Bazaz has again urged the Union Government to order an enquiry into the 'gruesome happenings' in the valley over the past month and take steps immediately to "restore the confidence of the people".²

The well conducted activities of Kashmir delegation and the wide publicity which was given to the yet unknown facts and figures about the happenings in Kashmir, produced the desired effect in proper quarters. The Janata leaders woke up and realized the gravity of the growing menace.

It was amazing to hear how ill informed the Indian Government and the leaders in Jantar Mantar Road office were about Kashmir affairs. Being heavily pre-occupied with the various problems in the rest of the country they had practically left Kashmir to its fate. With undue haste they had committed themselves to a certain course of action from which they did not know how to wriggle out even if they had the least desire

¹For full texts of the author's press statements see Appendix F.

²*Indian Express*, July 17, 1977.

or inclination to help the victimized. Nevertheless, they could no longer overlook the Kashmir disaster that now stared them in the face. Expressing the outraged feelings of the Janata leadership, Ramakrishna Hegde, general secretary of the Janata Party, warned Abdullah in a press statement on July 15, "to create such conditions in the state that the Janata Party and other democratic opposition parties can carry on their normal political activities freely and fearlessly".

Mr. Hegde said : "Innumerable instances of violence and goondaism against our workers and against our offices by the so called workers of the National Conference immediately prior to, during and after the recent election have been and are being reported in the newspapers and to us almost daily. No Janata Party flag can fly anywhere in the Valley as that would further endanger the lives and property of those inhabiting the area where such flag is hoisted. The police and the administration in the Valley have been accomplices in all such incidents".

Referring to Abdullah's statement, Hegde commented : "The whole tenor of statement seems to be to threaten our party out of existence in Jammu and Kashmir and to warn the central leaders of our party of dire consequences if they dared to help out our workers being persecuted in more than one way in the Valley". Hegde detected a veiled threat of cession in Abdullah's statement.¹

¹*Statesman*, July 16, 1977.

Pledges Unredeemed

I shall do everything within my power," assured Governor Jha after he had ordered the dissolution of the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly, in a broadcast from Kashmir Radio on April 11, "to ensure that the people are able to exercise their right of franchise freely and fearlessly". Emphasising the need to have impartial polls for the first time after independence, he said : "It will be our endeavour to deploy officers of integrity in the electoral processes. Strict instructions have been given to all concerned to provide the fullest protection to all political parties and individuals to carry on their legitimate activities. Action without fear or favour will be taken against those elements which take recourse to lawlessness". Obviously aware of the hooliganism which characterized the Lok Sabha elections a month earlier, the Governor added : "Stone throwing and other acts of hooliganism will be put down with a firm hand".

These were unambiguous pledges heartening to all democratic and freedom-loving sections among the State people and they welcomed them. To be sure such assurances had been given on every occasion in the past whenever elections were held but they were invariably honoured in breach. What lent importance to the Governor's words was the phenomenal success of Janata opposition in which Congress dictatorship was routed in Lok

Sabha elections. The State people believed that the time had arrived when they too could overthrow the totalitarianism of the Congress and National Conference in Jammu and Kashmir through free choice of their representatives in fresh elections to the Assembly.

As we have seen an unprecedented enthusiasm was witnessed among the people in support of the Janata Unit. But the more strength democratic elements gained the greater became the ferocity of the National Conference rowdyism. Therefore, the misgivings of the fighters for free poll could not be set at rest and lingered on and were expressed every now and then about the ability and willingness of the administration to make the election genuinely peaceful and fair. The two advisers of the Governor, S. Banerji and K.T. Satarwala, particularly the latter who was in charge of supervising the electoral processes and the state election machinery, frequently and with greater emphasis repeated the pledges given by the head of the State.

Nevertheless, the violence spread and peace-loving people cherishing hopes raised in them, were alarmed. In an outspoken article captioned "Violence in Kashmir Valley", Girilal Jain, editor of *Times of India*, described the situation and gave expression to the feelings of the democratic opposition in the State. He said that the Government of India "cannot seriously dispute that it has allowed the situation to deteriorate to a dangerous point and it cannot disown responsibility for this because the State happens to be under President's rule".

Referring to the rowdyism of National Conference, Jain observed: "The leaders of the National Conference could have restrained their men if they had chosen to do so and thereby helped create an atmosphere in which fair and free elections could have been held. But they have not chosen to do so. The charge that they have placed fairly large funds at the disposal of anti-social elements may not be wholly or even partly accurate. But it cannot be seriously denied that they have acquiesced in their activities. Thus a pall of fear hangs over the Valley".

After making a detailed survey of the events and developments in the Valley in June, Jain observed: "Surely it will be

absurd for anyone to suggest that anything like a fair and free election can be held in such an atmosphere". He was of the opinion that "only a strong central presence can create such an atmosphere".

The plain speaking of Girilal Jain and others lashed the conscience of Janata rulers in New Delhi. They realized that they should declare their intention in clear terms to assure the State people of a fair deal in the election. This they did while on electioneering tour of the State in the second half of June. On June 19, Home Minister Charan Singh addressing a public meeting in Srinagar announced that "goondaism would not be tolerated. Officials found guilty of shirking their duty to allow some persons to create a reign of terror or violent incidents would be punished." He made it clear that the Union Government would not tolerate attempts to foist on the people of any state or region leaders by hook or by crook. "If somebody here thinks that he is the master of Kashmir, that he has been sent by God to rule over the people of the state, he is wrong".² It was an appropriate answer to Abdullah's conceited assertions and highhandedness of the National Conference leadership and rowdyism.

Charan Singh admitted in a talk with newsmen that there was worse atmosphere in the Kashmir State than what it was in other states where elections had been recently held. But he assured the people that whatever happened in the past this time the elections are bound to be fair and free. "I can assure you on behalf of the Government of India that whatever needs to be done for this purpose will be done".³ Next day, June 21, addressing a public meeting at Jammu, Charan Singh was more emphatic and revealing: "After studying the situation I am of the view that a political party wants to win the elections by means of hooliganism. But hooliganism will not be allowed to be let loose anywhere in the state and the authorities have been cautioned about it. If there was lethargy (in the past) on the part of the administration in the Valley, it will not recur

¹*Times of India*, June 14, 1977.

²*Times of India*, June 20, 1977.

³*Statesman*, June 21, 1977.

in future".¹

In a similar vein, Defence Minister Jagjivan Ram who followed Charan Singh, addressing a public meeting on June 21 in Srinagar "warned that the Government would not hesitate to take the strongest action if there was any attempt to resort to violence and intimidation".² In a press conference next day he repudiated the suggestion that the Kashmir Janata was a weak organization. On the contrary, he said, he was quite hopeful that the party would win a majority of seats and form government in the State.³

The star performer, Prime Minister Morarji Desai, who spoke at many gatherings in different towns was unequivocal and most assertive of all. His theme everywhere was tersely stated in Srinagar on June 26 before an estimated audience of over sixty thousand Kashmiris. He said he had heard that people were being intimidated and coerced by hired goondas to vote for a certain party. "It was the duty of the Government to crush tyrants and instill courage in the hearts of the weak. Goondas creating a reign of terror would be jailed. . . Nobody can be permitted to hold the people to ransom. The law of the land would deal with anti-social elements without any inhibition. Strict orders have been issued to ensure that".⁴

Unfortunately, these high sounding pledges were not redeemed. For lack of any action to implement them soon after the Union Ministers left the territories of Jammu and Kashmir, hooliganism swept over the Valley, the adjacent Muslim belt in Jammu region and Ladakh with greater vigour and ferocity. The partisan officials as well as the rowdies in employ of the National Conference took the warnings and threats of high dignitaries as roars of paper tigers which could harm nobody. When the uncontrolled violence descended on the land pathetic appeals were made to New Delhi by opposition leaders, leading citizens and businessmen to come to the rescue of the victimized and downtrodden as promised.

¹*Times of India*, June 22, 1977.

²*Statesman*, June 22, 1977.

³*Times of India*, June 23, 1977.

⁴*Ibid.*

Maulana Masoodi sent an urgent telegram on June 30 to the Prime Minister Desai telling him that "your assurances about removal of partisan officials, complete impartiality of administration and firmness of police in dealing with hooligans remains unfulfilled". The Maulana demanded effective and immediate action. But deaf ears greeted the frantic calls. The local authorities only scoffed at the helplessness of the Janata supporters and welcomed the triumphal march of riff-raff, the hooligan and the rowdy. Even the newspaper correspondents not friendly to Janata Party and its leaders, reported that "the Chief Election Commissioner, Governor and Intelligence Branch had favoured the National Conference" and "just before the election polling booths were arbitrarily changed (and left unguarded) to suit National Conference".¹

It was time that the Union Government should have made its authority felt, intervened, removed partisan officers including the untrustworthy Governor and replaced them by men of undoubted integrity, posted C.R.P. and B.S.F. wherever Kashmir policemen had proved partial and thus fully restored the confidence of State people before the polling took place. But the bungling continued; then came the anti-climax.

Instead of redeeming the pledges, the Central leaders displayed indecent haste in acknowledging the "victory" of the National Conference at the polls. Even before all the results were out, Home Minister Charan Singh, ignoring the verdict of the Kashmir Janata Party, promised whole hearted support to the "winners". Next day, Prime Minister Desai sent a telegram of congratulations to Abdullah: "Please accept my congratulations on the victory of the National Conference in the elections to the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly".

The worse was yet to come.

One may seek justification for the changed stance of the Union Ministers in the official position they held under the Constitution. Having allowed the elections, whether free or unfree, to take place, they could not withhold lending recognition to the victorious. But the same cannot be said about the message of greetings despatched by Janata Party President,

¹*Sunday*, Calcutta, July 24, 1977.

Chandra Shekhar. He had neither a word of sympathy for the people who were beaten, looted, humiliated and harassed for supporting Janata nor a message to the Ad Hoc Committee which had borne the brunt and worked almost a miracle in two months by organizing the State party and launching a vigorous electioneering campaign from a scratch. Chandra Shekhar congratulated Abdullah on his Party's victory and expressed the hope that the State will witness progress and prosperity under his leadership.¹ Insulting to Kashmir democracy was the remark made by Madhu Limaya, general secretary of Janata Party, that "National Conference had obtained a clear mandate from the people". He was happy that "Sheikh Abdullah had assured him that his government would not resort to repressive laws against its opponents."² As we shall find Limaya and men like him were soon to become wiser.

The conscience-keeper of Janata, Jayprakash Narayan, could not resist the temptation of welcoming the victory of National Conference. It will be recalled that Narayan had blessed the move of planting Janata flag in the State and hoped that the gulf between Kashmir and India would be bridged. That hope had been dashed by Abdullah and his lieutenants who used Jayprakash's letter written with sincerity and pious wish to Karra, in routing Janata.

What was J.P. applauding when he welcomed the victory of the National Conference? Nothing could be more thoughtless than Narayan's message. It was the measure of confusion in the thinking of Janata leadership. The message was all the more astonishing for in a statement made in a different but similar context, J.P. expressed grave concern over "the significance and power which goondaism and anti-social elements have acquired and are acquiring in our life".³ Had Narayan known what part his letter to Karra played in ruining the chances of Janata's victory he would probably not have issued the certificate to National Conference.

Though these messages were motivated by the desire to keep

¹*Statesman*, July 7, 1977.

²*Ibid.*, August 10, 1977.

³*Ibid.*

the usurper on the right side of Indian Union, they betrayed the guilty conscience from which Indian leadership has suffered since accession of Jammu and Kashmir to India.

In the circumstances it was difficult for State Janata leaders to stand by their decision not to concede the victory of the National Conference. Following in the footsteps of the Central leaders, the Ad Hoc Committee adopted a resolution confirming the officially announced result of the election though, at the same time, it condemned hooliganism resorted to by the National Conference prior to and after the polling.¹

I submitted a proposal that the Central Government should be approached to constitute a commission of enquiry comprising a Supreme Court Judge to investigate the hooligan acts and irregularities committed in the election process. I pleaded further that in case the proposal was rejected, the Ad Hoc Committee should resign en bloc. But the proposal was not acceptable to my colleagues.

I could not associate myself with the spirit of the resolution because I continued to believe that the victory of National Conference was fraudulent. Once again I realized how difficult it was to stand by one's honest views after having joined party politics, albeit temporarily.

Back in New Delhi, I issued a comprehensive Press statements referred to earlier giving my version of the crucial episode in the constitutional history of the Kashmir State. In it I insisted on the appointment of a high powered commission to inquire into the violent deeds, unlawful tactics and various malpractices indulged in by the National Conference.²

Then on July 14, I submitted my letter of resignation from the Ad Hoc Committee to Maulana Masoodi earlier than I intended to do in any case, and reverted to my status of a non-party man as I had been for over twenty years.

¹See Appendix E.

²See Appendix F.

Post-Election Excesses

THE undeserved and unmerited office which was conferred on him by the weak-kneed Janata leaders after the elections, convinced Abdullah that his policy worked wonderfully well and proved a success beyond his expectations. Immediately after assuming power on July 6, he proceeded audaciously to consolidate his dictatorial regime. He appointed 24 members of the National Conference Legislative Party (half of the total number) including his son-in-law, G.M. Shah, as his council of ministers. He made changes in the personnel of the administration on a big scale putting his favourities and those who were helpful to him in winning the elections, on key posts; others who had refused to be partisan were either degraded or given jobs where they were believed to prove ineffective and harmless.

Abdullah reappointed his son, Tariq, as managing director of the Tourist Development Corporation which provoked wrath of unemployed graduates. In protest, hundreds of them resorted to hunger strike at Bud Shah Chowk, the hub of Srinagar trading area. The police used force, made lathi charges and burst tear gas shells to disperse the hunger strikers but failed. Finally twenty-one, four girls among them, were taken into custody and imprisoned.

In ordering appointments to public offices or selecting candidates for admission to medical, technical and other training institutions, he gave preference to kith and kin or partymen; nepotism, misuse of power and corruption surpassed his own previous records.

Abdullah lost no time to oppress opposition in order to subdue it. Early in August his chief colleagues approached the Janata leaders in New Delhi suggesting reconstitution of Kashmir Ad Hoc Committee by nominating pro-Abdullah men as its members.¹ This Hitlerian proposal was rejected. To pressurize the Janata leadership to come to terms with him the Sheikh began to be friendly with the Congress and seek its cooperation. But the State Congress leaders were unprepared to carry out his behests; the marriage of convenience fell on the rocks. "Mr. Abdullah thinks he is the king of Kashmir", a Congress leader told newsmen in a jam-packed Ghulab Bhawan in Jammu where Congress President Brahmananda Reddy was to address Congress workers. "There is no Indira Gandhi at the centre to support you. You are at my mercy he told us frankly".² Abdullah turned to the rival faction in the Congress; invited Mrs. Gandhi to Srinagar, gave her a royal reception on September 21 and made her an honoured State guest. But in her speech Indira uttered not a word in support of Sheikh which disappointed him. His plan to pressurize Janata by these tactics did not succeed.

Failing in this direction, too, Abdullah approached for support to the Communist Party of India (Marxist) in West Bengal where they had come into power. He opened negotiations with Jyoti Basu, chief minister of that State. Both met in Srinagar on October 28 and were reported to have agreed that "states should have more effective powers in the political, financial and economic spheres". Anxious to preserve his illgotten gains, Abdullah complained that "interference from the centre only encourages fissiparous tendencies".³

Meanwhile there were commotions in different parts of the

¹*Indian Express*, August 4, 1977.

²*Ibid.*, August 24, 1977.

³*Statesman*, October 29, 1977.

State and Abdullah became desperate and took up cudgels against opposition from whichever quarter it came. He ordered the Janata Unit to vacate the Forest Lodge which, it will be recalled, had been allotted to the Party for use as its head quarters. The Party believed he did not have the power to do so and approached the court for securing stay orders until the matter was finally adjudicated. But on September 17, when the case was subjudice, Abdullah sent a strong posse of police which pulled down the party's name board, threw out half a dozen Party employees who were present in the office and sealed the premises. Commenting on the incident *Kashmir Times* wrote on September 21: "The State Government's action in forcibly evicting the State Janata Party from the premises occupied by it in Srinagar smacks of authoritarianism and vindictiveness. The fact that the Government action followed the Janata Party move to approach the court makes it all the more deplorable. Obviously the State Government have tried to forestall the court action thus betraying a lack of respect for the judicial processes and rule of law".

A campaign was launched by the State administration to indiscriminately arrest political workers and others who displayed even the least sympathy with the opposition. Ali Mohammad Naik, a former deputy speaker of Jammu and Kashmir Assembly, was taken into custody at Tral on August 27. In the following days policemen were seen actively engaged all over the Valley taking people into custody and throwing them into prison cells. Addressing his followers on September 16, Mirwaiz Farooq moaned that the ruling party was not allowing his followers to carry on their legitimate political activity in the State. He revealed that about 1000 workers of his Awami Action Committee were in custody.¹

The ruling party did not hesitate to interfere in the working of the judiciary and at times refused to carry out the instructions of the Chief Justice, Rafi-uddin Ansari, who had been deputed two years earlier by Union Government to set high standard of justice in the State. In disgust, Ansari decided to relinquish the office.

¹*Statesman*, September 17, 1977.

Exchange of heated arguments took place in the Legislative Assembly when its first post-election session opened on September 7, and the disconcerting events were brought to notice and discussed. Outside the House, common people were becoming restive. Depicting the situation. *Kashmir Times* wrote on September 8 under the caption "Reign of Terror" :

"Soon after its victory in the elections, secured by dubious means, the National Conference workers launched an organized campaign of hooliganism and terrorism. A large number of workers of the Janata Party in Srinagar were assaulted, even women were attacked and the houses of Janata workers looted. . . The law and order machinery, instead of protecting the lives and property of the peaceful citizens only played second fiddle to National Conference workers. The State Government did not even hesitate to use such draconian laws as MISA to detain the workers and supporters of the Janata Party."

The editorial alerted :

"The way administration is being used against the political opponents of the National Conference only confirms the suspicion that Sheikh Abdullah is out to perpetuate one party rule in the State. His object seems to be to wipe out the organized democratic secular opposition from the State."

Emboldened by capture of power and connivance of Union Government in all that the State government was doing, Abdullah took steps to hold other elected institutions of local authority by strongarm methods. He ordered fresh elections of panchayats (village committees) and municipal bodies; everywhere the scenes of rowdyism were re-enacted.

Calling it a "unfunny farce" *Time of India* wrote in its editorial of November 7, 1977 :

"The farce to which the elections to some 900 panchayats in Jammu and Kashmir, held on October 24, were reduced is the worst possible advertisement for 'grassroots democracy' in action. Though they were farcical, they were not funny for in the widespread violence and blatant corruption that accompanied them at least one life was lost, over a hundred people were injured, some gravely, and another hundred, by official admission, taken into custody during fiercely partisan

clashes (unofficial estimates put this last figure at around 350)."

The *Times of India* demanded an independent enquiry into poll irregularities such as interparty scuffling, the physical coercion by losing candidates of presiding officers into announcing that they had won, the spiriting away of nomination papers, the modification of ward boundaries and similar outrages.

Indian Express remarked in its issue of November 8 that "it is no secret that the law and order machinery did break down at places both during and after the poll."

The policy of suppressing opposition was not and could not be confined within the State. A ban was imposed on the entry into the State of two dailies *Hind Samachar* and *Punjab Kesari* published from Jullunder (Punjab) on September 2 and 5 respectively because they were critical of Abdullah's misdeeds. The editor of the journals, Romesh Chander, approached the Supreme Court for getting the ban removed. The court issued notices to the State government to show cause why the writ petitions challenging the ban orders should not be admitted. Apprehensive of Supreme Court's unfavourable final verdict the ruling party adopted a measure which astonished the entire country though it only furnished further evidence of the real nature of the administration which had been imposed on the State people.

Barely four months after resuming reins of power in his hands, Abdullah realized that the popular opposition against him which he had been able to defeat at the hustings through horror and intimidation was not dead. From all sides and in all parts of Jammu and Kashmir patriotic peace-lovers assisted opposition politicians in actively undermining ruling party's position and in asserting democratic urges of the people. Abdullah feared a general uprising and panicked. By the end of October, unknown to anyone outside his cabinet, he got an ordinance prepared which gave the State government sweeping powers to crush opposition in general and critics of the ruling party in particular. The world came to learn about the ordinance a week later on November 6 when it appeared in an extraordinary issue of State Official Gazette.

The Jammu and Kashmir Public Safety Ordinance, as it is called, enables the government to detain persons and put curbs

on newspapers and other publications in the interest of State security and maintenance of public order. Under the ordinance a person can be detained for two years without communicating the grounds of detention to him if the same is considered necessary in public interest. The person can be detained without even the case going to the Advisory Board, which is to be set up under the ordinance, and there is also no bar on issuing a second detention order after the expiration of the first.

The section of the ordinance applicable to the Press gives power to the government to prohibit circulation of newspapers published in the State as well as ban the entry of newspapers published outside the State if the government feels that the same contain prejudicial reports.

The ordinance also regulates the entry of persons into prohibited areas. The measure defines the prejudicial act as one which is intended to or likely to prejudice the State's relations with Union of India or other states in the Union or maintenance of public order and peaceful conditions in the State.

The ordinance also covers all acts likely to cause disaffection among public servants or to prejudice, prevent or interfere with their recruitment, discipline or training, or to create enmity or hatred between different classes of citizens of the State or of the Indian Union.

Referring to the newspapers, the ordinance defines the prejudicial report as any report, statement or visible representation, whether true or false, which, or the publication of which, is an incitement to the commission of prejudicial act.

The two notable features of the comprehensive ordinance are that on the expiration of a detention order the detaining authority is not barred from making a fresh detention order against the same person for a further period of two years. Secondly, action can be taken on the basis of any document made, printed or published whether before or after the ordinance came into force.

The spirit of Emergency was manifest in the ordinance—the same draconian laws, sniffing out of civil liberties and democratic rights, gagging of the Press and arbitrary imprisonment for indefinite period of critics or any person crossing the wishes of the ruling caucus.

Commented the *Statesman*: "Whatever the truth, the scope of the present ordinance goes far beyond all democratically acceptable norms of official control. It vests the Government with draconian power of arrest without giving grounds and of virtually indefinite imprisonment".¹ Warning Abdullah to ponder over what he was doing *Times of India* wrote: "The issue is not one of constitutional validity but also one of political morality".²

"Our advice on the ordinance was not sought", admitted a spokesman of the Union Government. Indeed, it was reported that "The Central Government came to know of the text of the ordinance after it was promulgated".³ Home Minister Charan Singh told the Janata Parliamentary Party that the Union Government was informed about it after it had been issued.⁴

The promulgation of the ordinance raised an uproar all over India; it justifiably shocked the entire nation; it outraged those who had suffered the atrocities, indignities and humiliations under Emergency rule of Indira Gandhi. Newspapers from length and breadth of the country vehemently protested against it.

Calling it a retrograde step, the *Hindustan Times* said editorially: "What the State administration has done through the draconian ordinance is to resurrect all the dreaded features of the emergency under which the life and property, as much as freedom of speech and movement, were restricted or altogether denied at the sweet will and pleasure of the executive... The ordinance, therefore, comes as a total surprise and will be condemned by the people of India who have paid very dearly to win back their lost freedom".

Even the Abdullah lobby in the National Press and political quarters in New Delhi felt indignant. The *Indian Express*, friendly to the National Conference, said on November 8 that "the Jammu and Kashmir Public Safety Ordinance cannot but be described as a bolt from the blue". The *Express* hit the nail on the head by pointing out that "such sweeping fiats are either a sequel to visible public disorder or a precaution to meet

¹*Statesmen*, November 6, 1977.

²*Times of India*, November 8, 1977.

³*Ibid.*, November 12, 1977.

⁴*Indian Express*, November 14, 1977.

perceptible danger". Unknown to the people outside the State from whom facts are deliberately hidden by leaders and the Press, Abdullah knew what danger compelled him to resort to the black ordinance. Jyoti Basu with whom the Sheikh had discussed alliance of National Conference and Communist Party of India (Marxist) only a week earlier condemned the ordinance and remarked : "We are against detention without trial". The Politbureau of CPI (M) in a statement noted that it was unfortunate that the ordinance for preventive detention should have been imposed on the State. "The ordinance has come at a time when democratic forces in the whole country are pressing the Janata Government to withdraw MISA, abrogate the 42nd Constitutional Amendment Act, and restore full civil liberties and democratic rights. It is the demand of the democratic forces that powers of preventive detention should not be vested either in the Central or the State Government".¹

That the opposition parties in Kashmir should have furiously reacted to the enactment of the ordinance is hardly surprising. Mirwaiz Farooq, chairman, Awami Action Committee, Saifuddin Qari of Jamati Islami, Mufti Mohammed Sayeed of Congress Party wondered as to what was the provocation for promulgation of the anti-people law. Ved Bhasin, Secretary, Jammu Region Janata Party, described the ordinance as a challenge to all democratic people not only in the State but all over the country. He said "it should leave no one in doubt about the fascist character of Abdullah's government".²

Did the Central leadership realize what a blunder they had committed in readily yielding to the outcome of terrorization in State Assembly elections and in handing over the Kashmiris to the tender mercies of an unscrupulous adventurer ? It is difficult to answer. But one could detect signs of wisdom dawning in at least some of the Janata men. Party President, Chandra Shekhar, criticised the ordinance. In a press interview on November 10, he admitted it was "unjustified" and "did not represent a happy trend." The two general secretaries of the Party, Rabi Ray and Madhu Limaya, reacted sharply to the ordinance.

¹*Hindustan Times*, November 8, 1977.

²*Kashmir Times*, November 8, 1977.

Denouncing it Ray said "it was not expected." Madhu Limaya strongly deplored it. "Our Party is firmly opposed to preventive detention", he said. Both asked how could a man like Abdullah approve it.¹ They should have known that only self-delusion had kept Indian leadership from knowing the real character of National Conference and its boss.

To cater to the anti-Pakistan sentiments of extremist Hindus, Abdullah justified the adoption of the drastic measure by saying that "as long as there was no international agreement between India and Pakistan on the issue of the areas of Jammu and Kashmir State which were illegally occupied by Pakistan, the explosive situation on our borders will continue"; therefore, "there was a need to keep ourselves alert and vigilant and fully equip ourselves with laws to deal with such anti-national elements". This was an insincere plea because sometime earlier on August 25 his government to curry favour with pro-Pakistan Muslims, had decided to withdraw the Alfatah case in which 30 young men were facing trial on charges of sabotage, subversion and armed dacoity allegedly under Pakistan inspiration. The case was instituted in 1971 following the unearthing of a gang of spies by the police while investigating two cases of armed decoity in a night raid on the treasury at Pulwana in Anantnag district in which Rs. 75000 were carried away and a daylight robbery at the Kashmir University branch of the Jammu and Kashmir Bank in which rupees one lakh were stolen.²

It will also be noted that in their electioneering campaign Abdullah and Beg stridently demanded opening of Srinagar-Rawalpindi Road to allow free flow of traffic between Kashmir and Pakistan; both repeatedly assured the Kashmir Muslims that if National Conference is voted to power, their Government will take immediate measures to implement this proposal. That mocks the declared aim of the Public Safety Ordinance that it is directed to effectively deal with the evil-intentioned spies and guerillas from across the border. Free flow of traffic, it should be clear to meanest intelligence, would make it easier for spies and guerillas to ply their nefarious business.

¹*Hindustan Times*, November 7, 1977.

²*Indian Express*, August 26, 1977.

The fact is that with the healthy change in the foreign policies of the two countries, never were relations between India and Pakistan so close and friendly as today. A substantial public opinion has grown in Pakistan in support of restoring cordial relations with India. Spies and guerillas get little encouragement in any case for the present. The Pakistan Government is seriously making efforts to mend relations with India to achieve direly needed political stability and feel distressed by Abdullah's untimely utterances. A foreign office spokesman in Islamabad, according to Pakistan Radio, said that Abdullah was spreading falsehoods to justify the promulgation of Public Safety Ordinance which gives his government vast powers to detain anyone without trial.

The pledge to State Muslims in whispering tones that soon after capture of power National Conference government can, by adopting a simple resolution in State Assembly rejecting State's accession to India, bring them closer to their cherished objective was to hoodwink the religion-ridden, gullible, and backward classes to secure their votes. Now the Public Safety Ordinance is to suppress the opposition including the disillusioned among the voters who supported the National Conference lured by false hopes which could never materialise.

No, it is not the Pakistan guerillas and spies who haunt Abdullah and his henchmen; it is the enormous force of patriots, democrats and freedom-lovers who have been outraged which frightens the usurpers of power; hence the promulgation of draconian law to crush them.

"Ironically", said S. A. Shamim, a former member of Lok Sabha, "24 years ago his (Abdullah's) predecessor Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, also used the same language and logic for most of the repressive laws enforced by him. . . During the recent Assembly elections he had enticed voters with the prospect of opening Srinagar-Rawalpindi Road and some observers believe that his 'impressive victory' was partly due to this temptation. But that was at a time when he was not sure of his return to power".¹

Sheikh's explanation did not cut much ice and could not carry

¹*The Current*, Bombay, November 1977.

conviction. People asked to what explosive situation in Pakistan he was referring.

Obviously the ordinance is not meant to deal with evil-intentioned men across the border but to annihilate the ever-growing opposition to the ruling party within the Jammu and Kashmir State.

The Guilty Conscience

INDIANS have a guilty conscience over Kashmir. Whatever they may say to conceal their thoughts and for consumption of the world at large, or to silence the outbursts of Pakistan, at heart they feel they have not been fair to the Kashmiris who have acceded to India under coercion and through betrayal of Abdullah. The Union Government's Kashmir policy (if with all its twists and turns it can at all be called a consistent policy) has been initially formulated and evolved over the years under strain of the guilty conscience.

Jawaharlal Nehru was by nature and upbringing a secularist and a democrat : his respect for human values was beyond doubt. But, at times, he was carried away by impulse which distorted his vision. Kashmir was one of his blind spots and when in 1947 he agreed to the State's accession to India without first finding the will of the local people, it was a blunder. Apart from his love for the ancient homeland, Nehru was misled in doing so by Abdullah whose character he had not been able to size up. Kashmir became a running, festering sore, a problem which remains unresolved till today.

It was neither solicitude for non-Muslim minority, nor regard for principles of secularism and democracy which drove Abdullah to persuade Nehru to accept the offer. There is no

gainsaying the fact that the former had been declared *persona non grata* by the implacable creator of Pakistan. Knowing that Jinnah was adamant and vindictive and Kashmir's accession to Pakistan would spell his doom, Abdullah with the patronage of ever-accommodating and obliging Nehru, converted misfortune into glory by presenting himself as lover of Indian nationalism and secular culture in which he really did not have much faith. The tactics succeeded though Mahatama Gandhi, a better judge of men, timely warned Abdullah that India will not be able to save him if he failed to carry the Kashmiris along with himself in making the State an integral part of the Indian Union.

Nehru soon realized that after the coming of Pakistan into existence, it was no smooth sailing for India to go ahead with Muslim Kashmir by its side. One false step led to another, but with passage of time the retention of Kashmir within the Union became a matter of national prestige. Special care was taken and many due and undue favours shown to win the goodwill of the Kashmiris. But incessant propaganda broadcast by Pakistan to rouse religious passions of the Kashmiris coupled with mistakes made by our incompetent administrators successfully kept the State people resentful and sour. The alternative to mollifying Kashmiris in the eyes of Nehru was to hold up Abdullah as the most accredited and popular leader of the State and appease him to remain steadfast in keeping Kashmir with India. Though many in the Congress camp and many more in the opposition parties thoroughly disapproved of the appeasement and criticized Nehru for it, this became the anchor sheet of Kashmir policy of the Indian Government. It is true that though the opposition leaders hit the Government whenever the issue came up in the Parliament or at any forum outside it, they had no constructive proposal to offer. If ever a voice was raised to point out that the State's accession to India was morally indefensible and the source of all trouble, it was shouted down and drowned.

Aware of the Union Government's weakness in dealing with the Kashmir affairs, Abdullah consolidated his personal position and power which he was allowed to do in disregard of the public opinion in Jammu and Kashmir. His demands were

readily met, his misuse of power, nepotism, corruption and highhandedness were overlooked. To lionize him in public and boost him up as the peerless leader of the State people afforded moral justification for the unfair deal of forced accession.

It was only in 1953 when Sheikh foolishly forgot that patience and tolerance of the Indian leaders too had a limit, and he became supercilious in his attitude that Congress Government, overruling Nehru, took drastic action by deposing Sheikh and by despatching him into wilderness of prison and exile for a long period.

Nehru had to depend on Abdullah. Logically he had no alternative but to raise his protege's stature and stress his international importance whether or not he found Abdullah fit for it. For six years (1947-1953) the drama—farcical and fraudulent—was enacted. It was the period when Abdullah presented himself as the greatest champion of Indian nationalism and secularism, unrivalled among the Muslim politicians, a humble devotee of Mahatama Gandhi and great admirer of Nehru. He was however jealous of any interference in his personal power and resented the idea that the State people were entitled to enjoy under the Indian Constitution fundamental rights and not to be ruled by draconian laws passed by him.

In 1953, worried by the worsening situation in the State when the resentment of the people deepened, certain democratic elements in New Delhi asserted themselves and forced the hands of Nehru to bring the Kashmiris closer to the Indian people. Thus brought to bay, Abdullah turned a somersault, challenged the validity of accession, emphasized the say of Pakistan in State's future, demanded plebiscite and made religion the main plank of his political platform. Gone were the days when secularism and democracy were the fundamentals of his political faith. By his attitude and incessant propaganda, he accentuated the guilty conscience of the Congress leaders who found in him a frankenstein of their own creation. It was, therefore, a great relief when in February 1975, against all canons of justice and principles of democracy, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi once again foisted Abdullah and his chief lieutenant, Beg, on the Kashmiris as their rulers. Of

course, the caucus willingly and unhesitatingly renounced the plebiscite demand incessantly made for 22 years, to secure power without any prior reference to the public vote. For two years Abdullah reverted to the previous role and once again sang the songs of secularism, socialism and Indian nationalism.

The duplicity practised by Abdullah was heartily disliked by the opposition parties in India; indeed, a number of Congress men too were critical of Jawaharlal Nehru for being indulgent to the undependable hero of Kashmir saga. In Parliament and outside, the opposition did not mince words while giving vent to their disapproval of Kashmir policy. But the perennial question stared in the face of all Indians that Kashmiris were with India mostly under coercion and the guilty conscience it generated made the opposition leaders dwell in the necessity of accepting the Sheikh as the unavoidable evil. They were, however, not happy at it and frequently made it clear that if returned to power they would cut the Sheikh to size and put him at his place. The desired opportunity arrived in April, 1977.

Tremendous changes had taken place in and outside Jammu and Kashmir. The educated Muslim youth whose number multiplied several times in 30 years realized that Sheikh Abdullah's inconsistent behaviour had done immense harm to the interests of the Kashmiris; it had thwarted their progress and deprived them of several political and human rights enjoyed by all the other Indians. Although free elections were held in all other states, the Kashmiris alone were disabled to choose their true representatives because elections were rigged; they were denied many other democratic and constitutional rights because Sheikh's duplicity was creating suspicions in the minds of Indian people about the loyalty of the Muslims of Jammu and Kashmir.

Popular resentment deepened when Sheikh was installed in power in 1975 by the misplaced generosity of Indira Gandhi. As before for six years from 1947—1953, he now misused power and authority on wider scale; corruption, nepotism and high-handedness touched a new low. A sigh of relief was heaved by the Kashmiris when the majority Congress party withdrew its

support to Sheikh government and he was forced to relinquish power in March, 1977. It was evident the people wanted to have done with Abdullah and his bullying, blackmailing tactics.

Characteristically, Abdullah, terrified by forces arrayed against him, re-enacted the plebiscite farce to rouse the passions of Kashmiri Muslims whose edge had been blunted by aforementioned causes. He gave a vicious turn to State politics by declaring that Janata Party had come into being to throttle State autonomy by abrogating Article 370 of the Indian Constitution.

Commenting on the new stance of National Conference leadership, Girilal Jain, Editor, *Times of India*, wrote :

“The Kashmir problem is further complicated by the fact that Sheikh himself is not averse to inciting local subnationalism—witness the manner in which he, without the slightest provocation or justification, invented the myth of the Janata Party wanting to do away with Article 370 of the Constitution. What is worse, his followers are indulging in blatantly communal appeals, they are telling ordinary uneducated Muslims in the countryside that the majority community in India is determined to deprive them of their land and other means of livelihood and administering oaths to them on the holy Quran that they will vote for the National Conference”.

Jain pointed out that it could not be an accident that the Congress Party withdrew its support to Sheikh Government and “persons representing almost all shades of opinion in the State including some of those like Mr. Prem Nath Bazaz who stood by him when he was in political wilderness, have formed a united front against him under the umbrella of Janata Party”.

Jain went on to say :

“The Sheikh has always tended to speak with two voices. His accent in the Valley where the vast majority of the people happen to be Muslims who have had a raw-deal at the hands of all outsiders for hundreds of years, has always been different

from that in New Delhi and elsewhere in the country. And since this time the main challenge to him comes not from men known for their pro-Indian sympathies like the late Bakshi Gulam Mohammad, Mr. Sadiq and Mr. Qasim but from those who in the past have been highly critical of New Delhi it was only to be expected that he and the National Conference would appeal to communal sentiments”.

Girilal Jain beckoned the Janata Government in New Delhi that its task was not an easy one :

“Irrespective of party consideration it has to be wary of the Sheikh partly because his record in office in the last two years has left much to be desired—the setup under him is not known to have been either honest or efficient or sufficiently interested in the well being of the people—partly he has the tendency to change his stance on basic issues according to his convenience”.

Stressing that developments in Kashmir impinge on the country's security in the manner that is unique, Jain in conclusion warned the Union Government not to miss “this opportunity of assuring a genuinely free and fair election enabling the people to have a government of their choice. Like the rest of their countrymen, the people in the State prize liberty because they have discovered that much else hinges on it”.

Abdullah and his National Conference had committed not only one but a number of crimes punishable under the Election Rules; they had created lawlessness by resorting to hooliganism. There never was any love lost between Janata Party and the Sheikh. Indeed, most of the Janata leaders had in the past denounced pro-Abdullah Kashmir policy of Jawaharlal Nehru and made no secret of their determination to drastically change it at the first opportunity they could seize. In a talk he had with members of Ad Hoc Committee of the Kashmir Janata Party, Prime Minister Morarji Desai had stated that even as early as nineteen forties he had assessed and disliked Abdullah's politics which was harmful for the country and injurious to the interests of the State people. It is wellknown that many other Janata

leaders were unhappy with the fraudulent ways and deceptive statements of the Sheikh.

By a combination of fortuitous circumstances the long sought for opportunity had arrived in April, 1977 when a new and healthy turn could be given to State politics and get it rid of one-man domination and other evils; it could now be reared on democratic basis by involving common men and women through free and fair elections. And if their solemn statements were any guide, the Janata leaders appeared anxious to do so. Hopes rose sky high among the Kashmiris that the bright era was round the corner and a new shining chapter in their history would open with the elections to State Assembly. But then like a bolt from the blue came the anti-climax.

The warnings and assurances of Home Minister Charan Singh and Prime Minister Morarji Desai proved totally ineffective. Whether someone in the confidence of the Central Government like L. K. Jha encouraged the National Conference leadership in this behalf or they were bold enough to go ahead on their own, on June 30 a fresh and most vigorous campaign of hooliganism was launched with impunity all over the Kashmir Valley to terrorize voters, attack Janata offices, beat Janata workers and loot shops and houses of opponents by the hoodlums of the National Conference. Known and notorious goondas held the field and there was no one to keep them under control; no law and order to maintain peace. All approach to local authorities from Governor to Divisional Commissioner and Inspector General of Police proved fruitless; indeed, no one responded to the frantic calls of the Janata leaders. Telegraphic appeals to the Prime Minister from Kashmir Janata leaders were not even acknowledged. Unchallenged and uncontrolled the National Conference held the Valley and adjoining Muslim areas through sheer vandalism for eight days—June 30 to July 7—to the bewilderment of the Kashmiris in general and the State Janata leadership in particular.

It was in such a 'free and fair' atmosphere that the elections to the Assembly were held in the Valley and Ladakh on July 3.

With the declaration of victory of the National Conference a reign of terror descended on the Valley. In defiance of orders

issued under section 144 Cr. P.C. big and small processions of hoodlums went round beating innocent men and women, tearing their clothes and forcing them to pay protection money; the Janata candidates and prominent workers became special targets of the hooligans.

To the consternation of Janata supporters while the anarchy was in evidence everywhere not only Union Ministers but also the central leaders of Janata Party including President Chandra Shekhar, hurriedly despatched messages of congratulations to Abdullah who had recovered from "serious illness" on the success of his party at the polls. It enraged Kashmiri Janata leaders and infuriated their workers and supporters because they found themselves disgracefully let down in the battle for survival of democracy in the State. Since independence the Kashmiris had been betrayed from time to time by Abdullah, Nehru, Congress Party, National Conference and others. But this was the unkindest cut of all. What puzzled lovers of democracy in the State was the attitude of central Janata leaders who had for decades vehemently criticised Nehru, his daughter and other Congress leaders of that ilk for the irrational Kashmir policy by upholding Sheikh's dictatorship and by suppressing democratic and secular opposition to him. What staggered the Ad Hoc Committee was that the solemn assurances given in private meetings and public gatherings by the responsible Union Ministers should have proved undependable and the State administration become blatantly partisan after the departure of the ministers.

Various explanations have been given by political analysts to clear this baffling development in the election process. But the answer lies in the same guilty conscience of the Janata leaders which Nehru his associates and his daughter had fostered for three decades over Kashmir.

When anti Abdullah wave was running high in May, National Conference leaders made tremendous efforts to poison the ears of Janata high command by telling it that the Kashmir members of the Ad Hoc Committee were pro-Pakistan; the candidates which were later put in the field to fight elections were also accused of being partisans of Pakistan. Colour was lent to this false story when along with Janata banners a large number of

green flags was witnessed in the mammoth procession carried out by supporters of the Janata Party on June 30 in Srinagar. It is said that the report of the incidence was effectively employed to frighten the central Janata leaders by Abdullah and his sympathisers in New Delhi. The sudden change in the attitude of Janata leadership is ascribed to it by some observers.

There can be no denial that many of those who manned Janata Party in the Valley had stood at one time or another for State's accession to Pakistan. But this can be said of Muslims in general including the staunchest followers of the National Conference. Nor should the display of green flags have caused alarm because the mass meetings and processions in the Valley whichever political party arranges them partake of religious complexion. It is the usual practice with National Conference leadership to start a public meeting with recitation of the holy Quran; and, indeed, during his electioneering campaign Abdullah incited his Muslim audiences by telling them that the public meetings addressed by the Janata leaders refrained from this Islamic duty. There was therefore no occasion for the Janata leaders to feel panicky at the waving of green flags in the procession. It is not to justify mixing of religion with politics but a statement of facts which may not be liked but cannot be denied.

Change of ideas and opinions can be sincere in human beings as well as in political bodies. Was not Muslim Conference converted into National Conference in 1939? Janata Party itself is a glaring example of this quality of human nature.

It is no secret that in 1947 the entire Muslim population of Jammu and Kashmir enthusiastically desired to form part of Pakistan Nation, Abdullah's protestation notwithstanding. Circumstances have forced the Kashmiris, at any rate experienced and thoughtful sections among them, to revise their views and get rid of the accession phobia. Janata Party's following in the Valley had to come from such disillusioned, progressive and open minded sections. The Janata members could not fall from the heavens. It is therefore unfair to denounce erstwhile pro-Pakistanis and damaging to Indian interests to rake up the past of such men and women who had changed and desired to demolish totalitarianism and raise the structure of secular

democracy in the State, National Conference hypocrites have vested interest in dubbing every Kashmiri as Pakistani who is not with them and is bent upon fighting against authoritarian rule in the State. Janata leaders should have been able to see through the game and refused to be taken in.

Despite their bluff and bluster and condemnation of Nehru's Kashmir policy since the accession of the State to India, Janata leaders too are subconsciously tortured by the thought that their stand in Kashmir is not morally justified; that India is occupying the Valley not with the consent of the Kashmiris but by the might of the armies; they do not and cannot put any reliance on the goodwill of the local people. Therefore, the Janata leaders, like their predecessors in office, have arrived at the conclusion that it is better, wiser and more tactful to have a deal with a man who is internationally known with all his vicious practices and evils he indulges in, than trust the rising democratic elements which are at any rate non-descript and unknown at present. The Janata Party leaders obviously are heavily preoccupied with multifarious affairs outside the State and do not have sufficient leisure to devote to the revision of Nehru's Kashmir policy for the better; and under pressure of circumstances, they found it discreet to adopt the condemned policy without change. At the crucial time courage deserted the Janata leaders; they could not rise to the occasion; they were weighed in the balance and found wanting. Not surprisingly, Abdullah who had repeatedly censured and attacked the Union Ministers for publicly condemning hooliganism in scathing terms, paid rich tributes to Morarji Desai for his "uprightness" and "steadfastness". "I must congratulate Mr. Desai who allowed the normal electoral process to go on", he declared in a public gathering.¹

¹*Indian Express*, August 13, 1977.

The Losses and the Gains

AS was expected, the assembly elections of 1977 proved an important episode in the political history of Jammu and Kashmir State. They were held at a time when the State people, or at any rate the Kashmir Muslims, were passing through a mental crisis which afforded a golden opportunity to successfully induce them to come into the mainstream of national life from which they had persistently remained aloof since the subcontinent achieved independence. Jawaharlal Nehru had yearned for such an opportunity but did not get it during his lifetime. When it ultimately arrived thirteen years after his death his critical opponents who were now holding the reins of Government in their hands proved incompetent and chicken-hearted; they could not act boldly and stand by the forces of democracy and secularism which the changed situation had thrown up among the Kashmiris and were struggling to assert themselves.

Having committed a blunder in accepting the Muslim State's accession to India after partition of the subcontinent on religious basis, Nehru could not help spreading the myth that National Conference under Abdullah's leadership was the representative body of the State people because he was distressfully aware of the fact that there were no Muslims in those days of communal turmoil to support India's claim over Kashmir. In 1977 condi-

tions had undergone a substantial change. Two meaningful developments had taken place outside Kashmir in the seventies which had produced far reaching consequences on the thinking of the State Muslims; the psychosis formed by the partition had been broken enabling the Kashmiris to see their future in a clearer perspective and a brighter light; it had given jolts to the closed mind of the young and the old.

Disillusioned by capture of power by the Army all over the Islamic State towards which they had looked as their fatherland, but heartened by the overthrow of dictatorship in the battle of the ballot in India, the Kashmiris saw a ray of light in the latter which blazed the path to the goal of their own emancipation from one-man rule and the tyranny of his caucus. More importantly, confidence in the potentiality of Indian democracy had grown for the first time in the minds of the Kashmiris.

In rallying round the Janata banner the multitudes and the educated Muslims were not driven by their love for the Janata but by their hatred of the local tyrants and disillusionment with the hope of deliverance by joining Pakistan. Never before since 1947 were so many Kashmiris emotionally involved in a movement for the State's integration with India. An independent candidate in Wachi constituency in Anantnag district, Maulvi Abdul Hamid, went to the extent of seeking a mandate for abrogation of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution. Of course, he did not truly represent the changed thinking but his platform was not without significance in the new awakening. The Maulvi had been an active member of pro-Jinnah Muslim Conference in pre-1947 days and after independence he had been the founder-chairman of pro-Pakistan Political Conference. He felt that there was a greater need of civil liberties and human rights in the State than internal autonomy. He said: "The internal autonomy had been used by the political leaders to deny democratic rights to the people. This was true in the days of the Maharaja and also when Sheikh Abdullah was in power".¹

In yielding to the hooligan forces of National Conference and the fascist tactics of Abdullah the Janata Government has dealt a severe blow at the rising Kashmir democracy from

¹*Hindustan Times*, June 29, 1977.

which it will take long to recover. Whether another such opportunity to give an impetus to process of integration of the State with the Indian Union will soon recur, it is difficult to say because the democratic forces generated by aforementioned causes are at present in a shambles; there is a feeling commonly shared that Janata leaders have ignominiously let down the Kashmiris. In my opinion it would be unfair to blame the Kashmiris if they are reluctant or not at all prepared to again place any reliance on the pledges given by Indian leaders. This is the greatest loss which India has suffered and can ill afford in her none-too-easy endeavour to make the State's accession final and irrevocable.

For decades the Indian nationalists have disowned communalism and challenged the two-nation theory of Jinnah and his Muslim league as not true to facts of Indian life. By manipulating and rigging all past elections in Kashmir State attempts were made to prove that the ruling party whether it was the National Conference or the Congress represented the people without any religious or regional distinctions. The outcome of the 1977 assembly elections as accepted by the Janata Government has exposed the hollowness of the claim. Abdullah has bagged almost all the seats from the Muslim majority constituencies and all the seats from the Hindu majority constituencies have been captured by either the Congress, Janata or Independent Jan Sanghis; the two-nation theory thus stands vindicated to the chagrin of the nationalists. It is undoubtedly another great loss of Indian secularism.

Of no small magnitude is the loss suffered by demoralization of people in the Valley caused by the triumph of rowdyism which by common agreement characterized the electioneering campaign of the National Conference. Intimidation and terror have formed a part of Kashmir politics ever since the uprising of 1931; they are not totally absent in elections elsewhere; but the violence and goondaism resorted to by National Conference ruffians surpassed all records as was admitted by Home Minister Charan Singh, in one of his utterances referred to earlier. The minorities, both religious and political, such as Pandits, Sikhs, Bakaras (followers of the Mirwaiz) and Shias who gave vent to their long suppressed anti-Abdullah feelings

under the impression that a new era of peace and justice was about to dawn in which they could live without fear of aggression from the majority, are now bemoaning their indiscretion. They have justification to believe that hooliganism is an inalienable part of State politics and they have to live with it whether they like it or not; they have been compelled to believe that the National Conference is the only party that is entitled to rule, its unpopularity notwithstanding; it is, therefore, foolish and hazardous to oppose it.

Worst of all, is the communal disharmony on the one side and the regional disunity on the other which have been produced or revived by the mode of electioneering of the National Conference leadership. In the beginning and during the days of formation of Kashmir Janata unit, scenes of communal accord and brotherhood were witnessed all over the State; probably it was more pronounced in the Valley than in other parts; genuine secular politics was finding fertile soil to struck roots and assume a recognizable shape. But as the electioneering campaign of the National Conference progressed the scene changed for the worse, secularism becoming the first casualty. But for the widespread publicity of Janata to keep elections free from religious antagonism both the regions of Jammu and Kashmir if not also Ladakh, might have been engulfed in communal riots. Nevertheless, the election has left behind scars which it will take long to heal.

As against these losses, it augurs well for future that some gains have accrued which, in fairness, must be credited to the heroism, patience, and farsightedness displayed by the Kashmir Janata leaders throughout the two brief months of election.

Despite its recourse to hooliganism, rousing of religious frenzy, committing of irregularities with the connivance of officials, National Conference was not able to secure a majority of the votes polled at the hustings, (*see* Table giving details of the results of the elections). According to the final figures the Conference polled 807138 votes which is 46.22 per cent of the total; Janata claimed the second place by securing

TABLE SHOWING DETAILED RESULT OF KASHMIR ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS, 1977

SEATS WON

Region	N.C.	Cong.	Janata	Jamat Islami	Ind.	Total
Kashmir	39	—	2	1	—	42
Jammu	7	10	11	—	4	32
Ladakh	1	1	—	—	—	2
Total	47	11	13	1	4	76

VOTES POLLED

District	N.C.	Cong.	Janata	Jamat Islami	Ind.	Total
Baramula	1,91,778	25,399	68,716	30,351	10,728	3,26,972
Srinagar	2,50,600	12,665	1,24,484	2,748	6,708	3,97,205
Anantnag	2,13,805	45,657	43,445	24,343	17,983	3,45,233
KASHMIR REGION	6,56,183	83,721	2,36,645	57,442	35,419	10,69,410
Doda	28,267	9,321	21,038	1,049	17,988	77,663
Udhampur	16,719	26,060	23,286	—	17,355	83,420
Kathua	9,556	23,733	34,429	—	9,161	76,889

Rajouri	22,588	21,939	10,344	—	13,707	68,578
Poonch	24,740	21,325	7,532	—	7,222	60,819
Jammu	25,520	75,996	76,988	—	61,747	2,40,251
JAMMU REGION	1,27,400	1,78,344	1,73,617	1,049	1,27,180	6,07,629

Note: The details of result of polling in Ladakh District were not available.

414201 votes being 23.72 per cent. The rest of the votes were bagged either by the Congress, Jamati Islami, Communists or independent candidates.

It is remarkable that no fewer than 320366 men and women in the Valley and as many as 91499 in Doda and Rajouri-Poonch cast their votes for Janata and Congress candidates. These are predominantly Muslim areas in the State and the voters are more than 90 per cent Muslim. The few non-Muslim voters in the constituencies were too terror-stricken to leave their homes, attend the polling booths and cast their votes. It is therefore permissible to assume that the voters were almost entirely Muslim. That Abdullah's cohorts with holy Quran in their hands to make the Muslims swear by the sacred scripture to vote for National Conference, failed to influence over four hundred eleven thousand followers of the Faith is by no means an insignificant achievement of the democrats. It reveals a new thinking among the Muslims and speaks of a bright future for the ideal of secularism and democracy in the State.

The result of the election in Jammu is no less encouraging. Despite the in-fighting of two factions led by Sheikh Abdur Rehman and Thakore Baldev Singh who could not reconcile with each other and give a united fight to the candidates opposing Janata at the polls, the Janata did well. Bitterly criticised by even well-meaning friends, the choice of candidates in the Jammu region by the Janata election committee, was by and large a stroke of statesmanship. The committee rejected with full awareness of the consequences, the applications of Hindu fanatics (extremist Jan Shaghis) preferring others of balanced and moderate views. This move effectively counteracted the vicious propaganda of Abdullah that Janata was essentially anti-Muslim Jan Sangh in a new grab. Prime Minister Morarji Desai deserves praise for having stubbornly upheld the decision of the election committee though some of his influential colleagues pleaded on behalf of the rejected candidates to effect changes in the list. The election result has vindicated the committee.

Though sixteen Jan Sanghi applicants for Janata ticket rebelled against the party and contested election on their own as independants, only three of them won; in eight other constituencies the rebels split the votes facilitating the victory of the

Congress. On the whole, however, the Janata emerged the most popular in the Jammu region bagging eleven seats as against ten by the Congress and seven by the National Conference. Obviously the Janata could have done better by catering to the demands of Hindu zealots which it spurned. On September 2, it was announced that the sixteen rebels and their nine chief election agents were expelled from the Janata Party in accordance with the decision of the National Executive of the Party.¹ I consider this as a gain because it has blazed the trail of secularism and democracy in a majority Muslim State.

The final though by-no-means unimportant or negligible gain is the exposure of the fascist nature of the National Conference whose claim of being a secular, democratic body was mistakenly accepted inside and outside the State on its face value. By character assassination of their opponents, by sedulously spreading lies, by rousing religious and regional passions and by employing ragtag and bobtail to terrorize peaceful citizenry, the National Conference has given ample proof that basically the organization worships power and is little concerned about preservation of human values, moral principles or fundamental rights and civil liberties of the State people.

Considering dispassionately the details of the election result little doubt is left in the mind of a detached observer that had the Union Ministers firmly stood by their pledges to suppress rowdyism by iron hand, democratic elements would have come into their own and fascist hordes disabled to overrun the most sensitive area of the Indian Republic. It is a tragedy too deep for tears that courage deserted Morarji Desai and Charan Singh at the crucial time when it was most needed and when the running sore of the unresolved Kashmir problem could have been healed by giving unfettered freedom to the State people to express their inner urges and aspirations through voting at the polls.

¹*Kashmir Times*, September 3, 1977.

The Only Way Out

BECAUSE the Security Council Resolutions on the Kashmir accession dispute adopted in 1948-49 could not, for whatever reason, be implemented, they virtually became a dead letter. Though Pakistan has not ceased to put forth its claim over the State territory on the basis of its majority Muslim population and the UN Resolutions, the Islamic State has lost much of its charm to attract the Kashmir Muslims. Nevertheless, it would be courting self-delusion to believe that the problem exists no more; it would be a complacency fraught with danger.

To suppose that the Kashmiris have finally decided to throw in their lot with India and that there is no problem of the State's integration with the Union would be fatuous. The fact is that Kashmir politics is in a flux and it can take any turn in the future depending upon the nature of measures that Indian leadership adopts to give it a direction.

The unresolved condition of the problem is generally blamed upon the communal propensity of the much-maligned Kashmir Muslims. I believe this is grossly unfair. Why should we not admit that the spirit of secularism is yet unborn in India and the two successive ruling parties—the Congress and the Janata—which have had to handle the Kashmir question in the past are not free from communal bias and religious prejudice.

From Mahatma Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* (Indian Self Government) which is the source of inspiration to both Congress and Janata, to Secular Democracy is a far cry. To bring the Kashmiris in the mainstream of national life neither of the two parties has taken them into confidence by establishing democratic principles and norms in the State. The Indian rulers have only succeeded in creating cliques and caucuses upon whom power has been bestowed in the hope that they will profess loyalty to the Indian Union which may or may not be sincere. It is this ill conceived policy which has alienated the affection and sympathy of common men and women of the State, especially the Muslims, for India and frustrated all endeavours to settle the accession issue once and for all.

Among the most pampered favourites of the Indian leaders has been Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah who is supposed to stand a guarantee for State's accession to the Indian Union. Now and again, Indian leaders have realized through bitter experience what a great risk is involved in this unfounded belief but lacking moral and political courage to own Kashmiris as are people in the rest of India, they see no alternative to it and dwell in their necessity.

The latest example of the disgusting adulation was furnished by head of Indian State. While Kashmiris are passing through an ordeal, India's President, Sanjiva Reddy, tried to outbid Janata leaders by his fawning on Abdullah. In reply to a welcome address presented to the President in the famous Shalimar Garden during his brief stay in early October, 1977, he said that "for his achievements Sheikh Abdullah deserves to be called not only Sher-i-Kashmir (Lion of Kashmir) but also Sher-i-Bharat (Lion of India)". The President probably did not know or did not care to know how such remarks in the present political milieu deeply hurt the Kashmiri's feelings.

Abdullah is fully conscious of the weaknesses of Indian leadership and has no qualms to derive maximum advantage out of the precarious situation to fulfil his ambition of becoming the dictator of Jammu and Kashmir. The many ups and downs in his political career have taught him to play his cards dexterously. In his scheme of things the State people have, in the context of accession, lost all significance and meaning. They can serve

him only as a pawn in the game of power politics. After independence his single aim has become to maintain his supremacy over Kashmir by hook or by crook. For the fulfilment of his consuming ambition he has been playing alternately the aforementioned two roles, pro- and anti-India, in State politics.

By nature and temperament Abdullah is not unlike Idi Amin. If he has not been equally ferocious and ruthless as the Ugandan dictator, it is because he lacks sovereign authority which he would very much like to possess and tries to snatch from Indian Union under cover of Article 370. He is also afraid of Indian Army in the State whose presence often exercises a healthy and sobering influence on his rash temperament.

Abdullah has more than once expressed his ignoble desire to liquidate opponents for criticising his misdeeds. In 1971, the irrepressible Abdul Rashid Kabli (now a member of the State Legislative Assembly) took him to task in a public gathering for arrogance and improper behaviour. The enraged Sheikh responded by saying that "the budding politician should be hanged on the nearest lamp post for the audacity to question his doings". Had Kashmir been a sovereign state and not a part of Indian Republic and had Abdullah been the head of government at the time, he might have carried out his savage whim.

For want of space I cannot extensively deal with Abdullah's two roles during the past thirty years by quoting from documents issued on historic occasions and communications dispatched by him at crucial times. It should, however, be clear that he is opposed to integration—immediate or in the future—of the State with Indian Union because he entertains little doubt that it will hasten the end of his political career. Therefore, his strategy is to prolong the period of suspense, keep the State in doldrums and the Indian leaders guessing, enabling him to enjoy power for an indefinite period. The calm on the surface of the political and social life of the State, however, is deceptive; there is turmoil just below it which may be thrown up any moment with unpredictable consequences involving the entire country. All classes, communities and sections of the State people are seething with discontent; hidden to the eye things are simmering; it can give rise to a situation which may get out of control.

Yet, paradoxically, there never has been in post-independence period any time more propitious and congenial than the present one for persuading the Kashmiris to be loyal Indians and join the mainstream of national life. What the Congress leaders have under adverse circumstances and guided by short-sight failed to do for three decades may be accomplished by Janata rulers if they remove their blinkers, take courage in both their hands, treat Kashmiris as human beings and act with liberal and wise statesmanship in dealing with the unresolved problem.

Though the Kashmiris are obsessed since 1947 by the accession issue, it is well to remember that the primary aim of their struggle for freedom from autocracy and despotism launched as far back as 1931, was to achieve human and democratic rights, build institutions to safeguard them and usher in an era of peace and progress in the State. This is manifest from the pronouncements of the Kashmir leaders made during the hectic years (1931—1936) of the struggle. Farsighted and wise Indian rulers can remove the obsession by directing the attention and energy of the Kashmiris to objectives which motivated the 1931 uprising. Foisting discredited leaders on them will only harden the obsession and retard the healthy process of reversion to original stand which was accelerated when during the election days hopes were raised that Janata Party was determined to bring Kashmir State in line with other states in the Union so far as enjoyment of democratic rights as guaranteed by the Constitution was concerned.

Can the situation be retrieved? If the answer be in the affirmative how can this be done and what steps are required to be taken?

The first important thing to keep constantly in mind by every Indian patriot is that our profession of secularism which we arrogantly flaunt in the face of critics, may be an ideal contained in the Constitution; but the secular outlook has yet to form a part of our behaviour and become a habit. The day is far off when Hindu India which emerged at the time of Great Partition will become Secular India. Until then poor Kashmiris should not be unfairly denounced for entertaining suspicions and for demanding autonomy as was guaranteed to them by the Article

370. But the special status should not be allowed, as has been done in the past, to be exploited by a caucus for fulfilment of their own ambitions and by a self-seeking leader for his personal ends; it should be instrumental, as it was meant to be, in the growth of democratic institutions and a spirit of secularism in the State. It should serve to uplift common men and women and to promote *their* welfare. The main defect of India's Kashmir policy has been that it totally ignored the State people and their human and democratic rights, and laid stress on the role of individuals or groups who only feathered their own nests but could not deliver the goods which they were expected to do. It is astounding that the Congress leaders failed to see this plain truth; personal predilections alone prevented Jawaharlal Nehru from detecting it.

Though Janata leaders never saw eye to eye with Nehru on Kashmir, they have displayed puzzling thoughtlessness when called upon to handle the issue. Declaring vociferously that they are determined to discard the old injurious policy and stand by Kashmir democracy they have in the end sheepishly owned and followed Nehru's course of action. If in these circumstances State people are seething with unrest who can in fairness blame them? If the Muslims harbour fears and suspicions about Union Government's intentions why should they be denounced?

Even if the Janata leaders had boldly proceeded to revise and reorient the Kashmir policy after becoming the arbiters of India's fate, they had to face a difficulty which they would ignore at a peril. Knowing the antecedents of the constituent units of Janata Party, particularly of Jan Sangh with its rabid anti-Muslim past, it would still take a good deal of time for Kashmiris to trust Janata. Unfortunately the golden opportunity that Janata let slip in June-July, 1977, has by no means allayed the apprehensions and enhanced the Party's prestige in the State; instead, it has deepened the fears of the Valley people. The assurances given by top ranking Janata leaders of preserving State's autonomy under Article 370 are considered false. To Muslims the overnight sea-green change in the attitude of erstwhile Jan Sangh stalwarts who were foremost in demanding repeal of Article 370, sounds insincere and unbelievable.

After having thoroughly grasped the core of the problem by close application of open mind, the Janata leaders should move in two directions to inspire the confidence of the Kashmiris in the good intentions of the Indian Union: First, in an atmosphere totally free from terror or intimidation fresh elections to the State Assembly should be held forthwith under the supervision of a neutral authority. A pre-requisite for free elections is a nonpartisan administration and a governor whose bona fides are above doubt or question. The governor and his advisers should be men worthy of trust. They should be able to give the impression that the Central Government is impartial and determined to uproot violence, intimidation, terror and rowdyism; it is bent upon establishing democratic norms and practices. At the same time, a commission of inquiry comprising a sitting or retired judge of the Supreme Court should be constituted to report on the misuse of power by State governments since 1947 and the atrocities suffered by law abiding people of which ample evidence is available; the commission should also recommend adequate punishment for those found guilty and compensation to the aggrieved. Beyond doubt, the fulfilment of the pre-requisites will generate a political weather in the State favourable to India which it is difficult to envisage by mediocre intellect. But in these friendly moves the Kashmiris will see the dawn of the day when they can expect their five-decade old dreams come true.

It is reasonable to believe that a legislative assembly freely and fairly chosen will not misuse autonomous powers conferred on the State but will utilize the provisions of Article 370 to promote democratic principles and wellbeing of the State people. Nevertheless, precautions and safeguards will be needed to defend autonomy against the inroads of unscrupulous politicians for even the best conceived schemes can go awry and be in danger of being manipulated by men led by nothing else but abnormal insatiable ambitions.

Will the Janata ruling party be able to rise to the occasion, display appropriate courage and solve the issue which has eaten into the vitals of the nation? I wish I could answer the question by saying "yes". That the precious opportunity which came their way soon after the Janata leaders captured the seats of power

in New Delhi, was allowed to slip out of their hands makes me pessimistic. I can only hope that the latest developments in the State may force the hands of Janata Government to move with farsight and courage, earlier than I expect. The present power structure in the State is bound to collapse and come to an inglorious end. It has suicidal tendencies and is recklessly taking steps to uproot democratic opposition which will inevitably lead to a conflagration by exploding the dynamite of public resentment. It only remains to be seen if the Janata takes the time by forelock and generates a climate congenial for the growth of democracy, peace and tranquillity.

Ten years ago, in 1967, in my last book on Kashmir discussing complications, currents and crosscurrents of State politics, I posed the question: Is there then no way out? Answering it myself, I said:

"I think despite what has taken place the hope is not entirely lost, but it will need Himalayan moral courage to pause, review the policy so far pursued and adopt sensible measures to meet the situation in the light of experience gained... If the Muslims are dissatisfied and sullen the responsibility must be laid at the door of the Indian leadership. The Kashmiris have to be convinced that by being citizens of India their religion and culture will flourish and they will attain the political and economic freedom for which they have fought and made huge sacrifices in past decades... By encouraging the democratic view and by supporting the self-respecting patriots who represent the urges and aspirations of the Kashmiris, Indian leaders can create conditions in the Valley which will gradually bring about an emotional integration of the State with the rest of the Union".

Concluding my plea, I added:

"So long as Article 370 is not actually abrogated, a plan can be devised under which Kashmir will enjoy autonomy within the framework of the Indian Constitution. Today this is a possible alternative to repression, tomorrow it may be too late".¹

How I wish my plea had been considered and given a deep

¹*Kashmir in Crucible*, Pamposh Publications (1967), Pages 160-164.

thought by the Janata leaders if the Congress leaders who had hitched their wagon to the star of Abdullah in State politics, failed to do so. My views have not undergone any change during the past decade and I continue to believe that fostering of democratic elements and removing the hiatus between State people and the Central Government which Abdullah did so much to create, is the only way out.

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Epilogue

RESTORATION of civil liberties and democratic rights in India after the downfall of Indira Gandhi Government and capture of power by Janata Party at the centre, was called the second independence of Indian nation. It, however, did not take long for anti-social elements to reactivate themselves in different fields of social activity: satyagrahas, strikes, gheraos, processions often accompanied by violence, became the order of the day; students went on rampage in a few universities which had to be temporarily closed down; in several cities and towns number of robberies, killings and dacoities increased. Therefore, when law and order situation deteriorated, Janata Government was called upon to seriously consider the problem and adopt firm measures to subdue bad characters and disturbers of peace. A proposal was mooted that a new section may be incorporated in the Criminal Procedure Code giving powers to the executive enabling it to detain persons suspected of harbouring evil designs towards the State or indulging in activities harmful to the society. It was intended to thus make preventive detention a permanent feature of the C.P. Code which would obviate the necessity of promulgating a special legislation for the purpose from time to time as had been done ever since the promulgation of the Indian Constitution. As a matter of fact, the proposal in

the shape of a Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha by Home Minister Charan Singh in March, 1978.

Preventive detention is detested by freedom lovers everywhere because it violates the fundamental rights of citizens; it is opposed to the pledges given in their Party Manifesto by the Janata leaders which they issued while fighting elections and laying down the aims and objectives of the Party. The Bill was considered an affront by freedom fighters who suffered imprisonment and other hardships under emergency regime; it clashed with the new spirit which permeated Indian society after getting rid of dictatorship of Indira Gandhi. There was determined opposition to the Bill not only from opponents and friendly critics of the Government but also from within the Janata Party itself; the rank and file were agitated and angry. Strong voices of protest were raised by progressive Janata leaders condemning the measure. It was stressed that miscreants should be dealt with under the provisions of ordinary law which are sufficiently effective to deal with the situation. The central cabinet sensing the intensity of resentment gracefully yielded and directed that the Bill be withdrawn forthwith.

The widespread opposition in Jammu and Kashmir to the Public Safety Ordinance and strong unfavourable comments in the national press to the same appeared to have dampened the spirit of National Conference bosses too; Abdullah made a number of offers and gave assurances to mollify the people: removal of rigorous clauses of the Ordinance, toning down of its language, prior consultation with the opposition parties in the State Assembly, no whip to be issued to National Conference Assembly members to vote against their conscience; not to get the Bill hustled through and, above all, take each and every section of the people into confidence. Abdullah also indicated that he would wait and see how the Central Government dealt with the problem and equipped itself with powers to meet the deteriorating law and order situation. If the proposed Preventive Detention Bill was passed by the Parliament, he thought, his task would be facilitated and the case of opposition weakened. Being themselves in a mood to retain the preventive detention law in one form or another, both Prime Minister Morarji Desai and Home Minister Charan Singh did not totally

oppose the Kashmir Ordinance at the time but advised Abdullah to have its harsh clauses deleted to make it more reasonable and acceptable.

The picture entirely changed when under pressure of public opinion, the Janata Government had to withdraw the Bill meant to incorporate preventive detention as a section of C.P. Code. Abdullah's hopes were frustrated as he had no longer any moral or political base to stand upon in the issue.

Had Abdullah been a popular figure in the State and his government not a usurper, he would have, like the Janata leaders, bowed before the stiff opposition and abandoned the idea of enacting the draconian law. Not unexpectedly, he became recalcitrant and throwing to the winds the assurances he had publicly given to the people, went ahead with his plans to convert the Ordinance into an Act with the backing of his party's brute majority in the Assembly. He did so with indecent haste.

On April 1, 1978, Deputy Chief Minister Afzal Beg moved the most hated Bill in the State Assembly, ironically on the same day and almost at the same hour when Union Home Minister Charan Singh was seeking the permission of the Lok Sabha to withdraw the Bill to incorporate a section on preventive detention in the C.P. Code.

What took place in the State Assembly on this dismal day has been comprehensively reported by the special correspondent of the *Kashmir Times* in its issue of April 2; I do not feel that it is necessary to offer an apology for making long quotations from the report because it is important that democrats everywhere and Indian public in particular, should remain informed about developments in the State. The special correspondent wrote :

"The Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly today passed the controversial Public Safety Ordinance amidst unprecedented scenes including *dharna* by four opposition members with Marshal of the House removing them forcibly, slogan shouting, walk-out by the entire opposition and angry exchanges between the treasury benches and the opposition. The speaker extended the sitting of the House six times to enable the Government to rush through the Bill. Mr. Abdul Ghani Lone, leader of the opposition, called it a black law

and lawless law. He displayed his copy of the Bill painted darkest black.

"The opposition members' repeated pleas to allow them to speak on the Bill, as according to them it was a vital piece of legislation having a bearing on the people's future, were turned down. The opposition members wondered why the Government wanted to hustle through the Bill without giving them an opportunity to speak. Significantly not a single member from the ruling National Conference spoke on the Bill. The Finance Minister alone spoke in defence of the Bill.

"Mr. Abdul Rashid Kabli (Janata) pointed out that it was the responsibility of the centre to defend the borders and deal with anti-national elements; as such the subject matter of the Bill did not fall under the purview of the State Government.

"After Mr. Beg moved the Bill for consideration, Mr. Mangat Ram (Cong-I) and Mr. Bhim Singh (Cong) moved amendments of referring the Bill to a select committee. When the names of the members of the select committee were announced which included (his name), Mr. Lone, the Janata Party leader, got up to say that there could be no question of his becoming a member of the committee. His party was fundamentally opposed to the Bill both in letter and spirit. They wanted this Bill to be scrapped 'look, stock and barrel' as this was a 'lawless law'. We should bury this draconian Bill once and for all.

"Mr. Lone protested against the adoption of the motion in this manner and with such haste. He said he was on his legs to speak on the motion but instead of allowing him to say something the Speaker put the motion to vote. This, he said, was curtailment of members' right.

"When the Chief Minister angrily interrupted, Mr. Lone pointed towards him and quipped: 'they have come out in their true colours and they do not even allow anyone to speak on this Bill'.

"The Deputy leader of the Janata Party, Mr. Rishi Kumar Kaushal, said the Chief Minister should not forget that history repeats itself. Mr. Kak enacted such law and himself became a victim of it. The late Bakhshi Ghulam Mohammed met the same fate. Mr. Kaushal said that the Janata Government at

the centre had withdrawn the Bill on preventive detention in response to popular view. 'Then why do you bring forth such a Bill to put shackles on our of freedom' ? he asked.

"Referring to the Chief Minister's claim that his life was an open book, Mr. Lone said that he had added this black page to that book. He warmed up to describe the Bill as 'black law' and amidst shouts of protests from NC members said : 'you have maintained the traditions of goondaism through your workers, and corruption is rampant. All this makes it clear that your fight was only for the chair.'

"Intervening in the discussion, the Finance Minister, Shri Devi Dass Thakur, said some of the provisions of the Ordinance, which had received criticism, had been substantially diluted or altogether deleted. Therefore, it was wrong to say that it was a draconian law. He said a peculiar situation had arisen in the State since September, 1977, with the expiry of all laws on the subject. The Government had a vital responsibility to look after the interests of the State and in this matter no risks could be taken. The promulgation of the Ordinance came in this background.

"When the Speaker called upon Mr. Beg to reply to the debate the opposition members protested saying they wanted to speak on the subject and most of them were on their legs but were not allowed to do so. Mr. Prithvi Chand (Janata) came forward to sit on *dharna* before the Speaker's desk and alleged that the members' voice was being stifled. Another Janata member, Mr. Tulsi Ram, and a Janata Front member, Mr. Ram Nath Manhas, also joined him in *dharna*. The Speaker directed the Marshal to remove these members from the House after he had named them. The Marshal took the slogan shouting members away. Other Janata Party and Janata Front members then walked out shouting against the Bill.

"Syed Ali Shah Gilani of Jamati Islami was interrupted by NC members when he tried to speak. He criticised the Bill and described it as against the people's interest. There were exchanges between him and the treasury benches. After tearing the Bill into pieces, Mr. Gilani also walked out.

"Later, the House passed the Bill with voice vote without the minister piloting the Bill replying to the points raised during

the discussion."

From a detailed examination of the provisions of the Bill it was clear that only slight changes of inconsequential nature had been made in the text of the Ordinance when it was presented in the form of the Bill; the basic structure of the legislation was maintained. The State people have thus lost freedom and are entirely at the mercy of Government and administration. The fruits of freedom struggle gained bit by bit since 1931 when the first uprising against despotic rule took place, have been snatched away by those who claimed to be champions of freedom. Even the small liberties guaranteed by the Dogra Maharaja in the 1934 Constitution have been suppressed. The sword of Democles in the shape of Public Safety Act will remain hanging over the heads of those who do not see eye to eye with the authorities or toe the line chalked out by the National Conference leadership for them. Even if the sword does not fall the fear of its falling any moment will prevent a freedom lover from acting with any sign of independence. After having had a whiff of fresh air for a few months while labouring under the illusion that Janata revolution had crossed the frontier and emancipated him too after thirty years, a Kashmiri has been forced to return to his shell and isolation as before. Resentment and sullenness have gone underground to strengthen the hands of anti-Indian groups and politicians.

This would explain why calm has descended upon the political life in the State for the past few months. Nevertheless, it would be dangerous to rely on the apparent tranquillity when lava of anger and dissatisfaction is simmering just below the surface. Suppression of free thought and elementary human rights has never brought peace to resentful people anywhere in the world. The fate of Emergency and the first National Conference Government (1947—53) are glaring proofs of this truth. The entire history of civilized humankind is replete with instances in which mighty perpetrators of misrule and oppression who believed they were unassailable, came to an inglorious and dismal end. Can it be different in the case of Abdullah coterie?

Commenting editorially on adoption of the Bill and reflecting public opinion in the State the *Kashmir Times* under the caption "Shackles on Liberties" observed :

"By hustling through the black law called Public Safety Bill, ignoring strong opposition both inside and outside the Legislative Assembly, Sheikh Abdullah's 9-month old government has only smeared its face. It is the blackest piece of treachery against the people who elected the government on the categorical assurances that their civil liberties will be restored and fundamental rights fully protected.

"The Public Safety Bill, as passed by the Legislative Assembly amidst unprecedented scenes and protests by the opposition, does not make any basic departure from the Ordinance on the subject that it replaces. It gives the Government powers to detain any citizen without bringing charges against him, without giving any opportunity to him to defend himself and even in most cases without communicating the grounds for his detention. It imposes curbs on the freedom of the press empowering the Government to seize any document, including a newspaper.

"The Chief Minister had not adhered to assurances that the State Government would await the Centre's decision on the question of preventive detention. . .its decision to go ahead with arming itself with the authoritarian and repulsive enactment has only proved that the present ruling clique in the State has no regard for democratic norms and practices."

Do the Janata leaders realize that they committed a blunder in betraying the Kashmiris and in allowing the National Conference to capture power through fraud, intimidation and terror? Possibly most of them believe that no alternative was left to them but to abandon the Kashmiris to their misfortune which they have suffered since 1947. Nevertheless, this is hardly the way to bring the Kashmir problem nearer solution or to integrate the State with the Union. The longer India fails to induce the Kashmiris to voluntarily join the mainstream of Indian public life the more complicated and difficult the problem is bound to grow. Today no Indian state other than Jammu and Kashmir carries on its statute book a cruel law like the Public Safety Act to run its administration. Kashmiris pertinently ask why they should have been allowed to be singled out for being trampled upon by a group of unscrupulous men from amidst themselves to fulfil their lust for power? Why should those great patriots

who destroyed congress dictatorship and claim to have brought second freedom to the country feel paralysed when Kashmiris are being crushed under the heel of depotic rule in the State ? Why do fountains of justice run dry in their case ? The general impression is that like their predecessors in office, Janata Government too does not believe that the Kashmiris as a class can be trusted to be loyal citizens of India and have, therefore, to be kept under the leash. What it implies and how disastrous it can be in its consequences should be obvious to any farsighted student of Public affairs. Appeasement of one caucus or another is certainly not the way of making Kashmiris as part of Indian nation.

It is however foolish to unduly stress the role of the Central Government or the Janata Party in bringing the Kashmir State in line with other States under the new dispensation. Fostering of Kashmir democracy solely depends on the capacity of the Kashmiris themselves to stand up, organise and fight for liberty within the framework of the Indian Constitution. For allowing National Conference to play the fraud and capture power Kashmiris are no less responsible than Janata Party. They need to learn a lesson from what has happened and refuse to remain cowed down. If a number of valiant and intelligent men and women decide to form a well-knit political party of like-minded men devoted to the cause and unswervingly stand by it it will not be long before the usurpers are discredited and thrown out. My opinion formed after gaining bitter and varied experience during the three months of electioneering is that there are tens of thousands of men and women in the Valley, as all over the State, eager and prepared to suffer for achievement of democracy; what is needed is a sincere, honest and selfless leadership.

The Central Janata leadership has missed the bus which may not come their way again. The Kashmiris are not to blame if the name of Janata has ceased to attract them. After the nightmare through which they have passed and the traumatic experience they have made, it will be very difficult to rally them round the Janata banner. And for this the responsibility should be laid at the door of Janata highups. Nevertheless, a strong social base for fighting dictatorial trends and authoritarian tendencies exists. Let a few men and women of unquestioned integrity, sincerity

and merit come forward to take up the historic task of organising and leading the trodden lovers of liberty and justice to victory. Such a band will find that their call will not go in vain; it will be readily and warmly responded in all the three regions of Jammu & Kashmir.

Appendices

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APPENDIX A

House No. 13A
Jawahar Nagar,
Srinagar Kashmir,
April 27, 1977

My dear Shri Mehta,

I have just heard that my name has been included in the list of the members of the ad hoc committee formed to organise the Jammu and Kashmir Janata unit. While I thank you for the honour you have done me, I have to say that I am surprised at it. Neither you nor your two colleagues spoke to me about it during your stay here, nor did Maulana Masoodi or Mr. G.M.D. Karra make any mention of it in our frequent talks.

It is against the basic principles of the political philosophy in which I believe to be a member of any political party. For that reason I have not belonged to any party during the past twenty-five years. When I, along with Mr. Karra, flew into Srinagar from New Delhi on 15th of April I made a statement to this effect in a Press conference at the airport.

No doubt, I am deeply interested in seeing that the Janata party comes out with flying colours in the forthcoming Assembly elections and to this end I have pledged my fullest cooperation and support to Maulana Masoodi and Mr. Karra.

From the day that the Indian subcontinent achieved independence, I have unhappily and helplessly witnessed politicians in power or without it, trampling under feet human and democratic rights of the Kashmiris; hooliganism and corruption have become a conspicuous feature of our social and public life; free voice of the people has been ruthlessly curbed; all elections to the State Legislature or to the Parliament have been rigged since 1947; never were the electors given the opportunity to choose their true representatives freely and fearlessly. It is my ardent desire to see that this sordid state of affairs came to an end.

With the birth of Janata party and the recent upheaval in

India in which totalitarian forces were crushed, a hope has been kindled in us that the party may also prove instrumental in laying the foundations of democracy in Jammu and Kashmir State. That is the reason why I have become enthusiastic, despite my ill health, in whole-heartedly supporting the Janata party. Nevertheless, to be a member of the party is a different matter and, for reasons stated above, I regret my inability to associate myself with the party as a member.

Your announcement has put me in an embarrassing position. While I cannot be a member of the Janata Party I do not, at the same time, want to act in a manner which will be exploited by the opponents to the detriment of the cause dear to my heart.

I wonder if it will be convenient to you to delete my name from the list of members of the ad hoc committee.

If, however, there is any difficulty in doing so, I would suggest that I shall function as a member of the committee during the period of the elections but should be excused from continuing as such when the elections are over.

In any case, you may rest assured that my services, whatever they are worth, will be at the disposal of the Janata unit for the achievement of the objective stated earlier.

With kind regards,

Your sincerely,

Prem Nath Bazaz

Shri Asoka Mehta
Janata Party
Jantar Mantar Road
New Delhi

Tel: 651658

Asoka Mehta
LL. D., D. Litt.

Jaya Rose Farm,
DLF Colony,
Chattarpur Village,
Via Mehrauli,
New Delhi 110030.
May 4, 1977

Dear Shri Bazaz,

Thank you for your letter of 27th April. It reached me only yesterday.

I regret your name was included in the ad hoc committee without seeking your consent, Maulana had suggested your name and I presumed that he had sought your consent—and perhaps he assumed that I had done it !

If it is against your principles or conscience to be a member of a political party, you can always resign from the committee explaining to the public your position and assuring your support to the Janata Party and its unshakable anchorage in democracy.

Our pledge for free elections in your state remains firm and inviolable.

Yours sincerely,

Asoka Mehta

Shri Prem Nath Bazaz
House No. 13A
Jawahar Nagar
Srinagar, Kashmir

APPENDIX B

Forest Lodge
Srinagar, Kashmir
June 30, 1977

EXPRESS TELEGRAM

SHRI MORARJI DESAI
PRIME MINISTER
NEW DELHI

YOUR ASSURANCE ABOUT REMOVAL OF PARTISAN OFFICIALS, COMPLETE IMPARTIALITY OF ADMINISTRATION AND FIRMNESS OF POLICE IN DEALING WITH HOOLIGANS REMAIN UNFULFILLED. TERRORISATION OF CITIZENS ESPECIALLY JANATA WORKERS CONTINUES CEASELESSLY WITH POLICE CONNIVANCE. SOME BIG OFFICERS ENCOURAGE COMMUNAL, SECTIONAL AND ANTI-INDIA PROPAGANDA. ATMOSPHERE SURCHARGED WITH RELIGIOUS AND SECESSIONIST FRENZY. APPREHENSIONS DEEPEN THAT AT CERTAIN PLACES POLLING BOOTHS WILL BE CAPTURED BY NATIONAL CONFERENCE HOODLUMS OR THEY WILL THREATEN VOTERS AND COMPEL THEM EITHER NOT TO VOTE OR VOTE FOR CONFERENCE CANDIDATES. REPORTS RECEIVED FROM MANY CONSTITUENCIES INDICATE POLICE ARRANGEMENTS TOTALLY INADEQUATE TO MAKE POLL FREE AND FAIR. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES PARTY LEADERS FEEL DISMAYED. THE BEST I CAN DO IS TO BRING GRAVE SITUATION TO YOUR NOTICE.

M.S. MASOODI
CONVENER JANATA PARTY

Phone No. 5684

Telegrams : Janata

Janata Party
Jammu and Kashmir State,
Forest Lodge, Maulana Azad Road,
Srinagar-190001, Kashmir.

Ref. No. 305/JP/77

Dated : 30-6-1977

My dear Shri Jha,

I enclose copy of a telegram I have just despatched to Shri Morarji Desai, Prime Minister, which briefly describes the feelings of Janata Party leadership about the political situation which again shows signs of deterioration.

Had proper and strong measures been taken in wake of the visits of Union Ministers as all of them had assured us that your government is determined to do, we have no doubt that by now political life in the valley would have returned to normalcy. But even the few but vital commitments made by the three Ministers in their public utterances of curbing hooliganism and punishing biased officials have not been fulfilled. Thus, only after a few days of the ministers' departure, both hooligans and officials with anti-Janata tendencies particularly in the Police Department, feel emboldened to readily assist National Conference workers in their nefarious activities in different parts of the valley. I have instances where big officials guide and direct Conference activists in their propaganda work and smaller government employees participate in public gatherings and even address audiences from platform with impunity. Some police station officers and their underlings have achieved notoriety in harassing our men at the instance of National Conference leaders.

We have brought these facts to the notice of the Additional Inspector General and concerned Superintendents of Police from time to time but to no purpose. Instead, our active workers

who form the superior cadre of our movement (including polling agents) have been put behind the bars not for any defiance of law but only because the National Conference leadership is afraid that these workers if left free can effectively mobilise numberless voters in favour of Janata.

Though my colleague, Shri Prem Nath Bazaz, has met Shri K. T. Satarwala many a time and put various proposals before him to arrest the deteriorating situation and, more particularly, about adequate police arrangements on the polling day to protect peaceful citizens against criminal intimidation by miscreants, to enable them to vote fearlessly, we are not sure that foolproof arrangements are in the making. From all we observe it is abundantly clear that the Government is unprepared and will be taken unawares on Sunday to the utter frustration of the aim of "free and fair election" which has been so much trumpeted about by a number of distinguished and responsible personalities including yourself.

We do not seek any favours but insist on neutrality and effective functioning of your administration, impartiality of Police officials and curbing of hooliganism to make the elections free. Of this we do not find any signs in the valley.

That is why I have been compelled to despatch the telegram to Shri Morarji Desai and why I address this letter to you. It is for you to see what action is needed to be taken to set the matters right before it is too late.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,

M.S. Masoodi
Convener, Ad Hoc Committee

Encl: One leave

Shri L.K. Jha
Governor
J&K State
Srinagar

Governor
Jammu & Kashmir

Raj Bhawan,
Srinagar
July 1, 1977

My dear Maulana Sahib,

I got your letter No. 305/JP/77, dated the 30th June late last night. I confess I found it a little unexpected. As you know, in order to ensure peaceful impartial polling, a number of steps were taken. Strong police reinforcements have been obtained from the Centre. A large number of anti-social elements have been apprehended. Following these, as you would have observed, peaceful conditions have prevailed throughout the State, except in Srinagar where too the clashes have been mainly between traditionally hostile groups. Jammu region has already had completely peaceful polling.

Every complaint about the impartiality of any official has been promptly looked into and a very large number of changes of officials suspected of partiality have been made. With reference to your statement that some big officials guide and direct National Conference activists, I would say that only when specific instances are brought to the notice of the administration that action can be taken. I have always been available to leaders of all political parties and I have had the pleasure of meeting you on a number of occasions in recent days. I make it a point to get any complaints which are made to me investigated promptly. Shri Satarawala and the Additional Inspector General of Police have also assured me that they have been taking action on complaints brought to their notice.

As regards your apprehensions regarding police arrangements on the polling day, I should like to assure you that we are doing every thing possible to prevent intimidation, hooliganism and

capture of polling booths. If you can indicate to us the polling booths or areas about which you are apprehensive, we shall certainly take special steps to strengthen the police arrangements there.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,

L.K. Jha

Maulana M.S. Masoodi
Convener, Janata Party
M.A. Road
Srinagar

Phone No. 5684

Telegrams : Janata

Janata Party
Jammu and Kashmir State,
Forest Lodge, Maulana Azad Road,
Srinagar-190001, Kashmir.

Dated : 2-7-1977

My dear Shri Jha,

Your letter of today came to my hand when I returned from Shopian this evening. I thank you for the same.

At this late hour I do not propose to enter into any controversy about various points to which you have referred and which are not borne out by facts. We have repeatedly brought to the notice of the Government officials at various levels the complaints stated in my previous letter but with little satisfactory results.

Despite the claim made that the situation in Srinagar is under control, I am afraid that you are kept in the dark about the actual happenings and the methods which are employed to deal with the depredations of the hooligan elements and the callousness of the administration towards their victims. Even today a number of Janata supporters were beaten, blood was shed, homes and shops looted and property damaged while the National Conference carried out their procession through some streets of the city. Some of the wounded were brought to our office in blood-soaked clothes while others were sent to hospital. A number of molested women too came crying and bewailing their lot.

However, we are deeply worried indeed about the police arrangements on Sunday when polling is to take place all over the valley. The Kashmir Police has, let it be frankly admitted, failed in the discharge of their responsibility and amply displayed that most of its members are deeply influenced by partisan

politics. This is most unfortunate but can be overlooked at great risk by us.

In the absence of concrete proposals and in view of past bitter experience I do not know what value to attach to your assurance that everything possible is being done to prevent intimidation, hooliganism and capture of polling booths. I think that the only effective measure would be to deploy entirely C.R.P. under their own officers from 2nd July till the counting of votes is completed and excitement disappears.

The C.R.P. should not only guard the booths but also make rounds in the nearby areas so that all chances of intimidation, hooliganism and terrorisation of voters are reduced to minimum. The officers of the C.R.P. should be instructed what is expected of them while on duty on these fateful days. This alone in my opinion can allay the apprehensions of peaceful citizens though I continue to doubt if free and fair elections are possible after what has happened during the past fortnight.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,

M. S. Masoodi
Covener, Ad Hoc Committee

Shri L.K. Jha
Governor
Jammu & Kashmir
Srinagar

APPENDIX C

Janata Party
Jammu & Kashmir

13/7PC/77

• Forest Lodge
Srinagar, Kashmir
14-6-77

My dear Asokji,

Nobody knows it better than you that due to my old age and ill health I took up most reluctantly the onerous task of organising the J & K Janata Unit on the clear understanding that the Central Party will cooperate with me in every manner. To my dismay I find that the assistance I had expected to receive is not forthcoming and it is becoming increasingly difficult for me and my colleagues to shoulder the responsibility of successfully leading the Kashmir Unit.

Our Unit is barely one and half months old. You can imagine the tremendous odds we had to confront in building up the organisation and in preparing ourselves to fight the forthcoming assembly elections against well equipped and well established parties like the National Conference and the Congress which have been in the field for decades.

Yet in the very short time we have patiently and with determination stood up and thrown a serious challenge to the opponents who are using all fair and unfair means to defeat us. Their resources too are immense.

In these circumstances, if we fail to secure the minimum necessities to run the organisation, I am afraid it will become impossible to carry on and I shall be compelled to retire.

On 18th May I sent a memorial through one of our colleagues, Maulvi Iftikhar Hussain Ansari, to Shri Chandra Shekhar, President Janata Party, apprising him of our minimum needs. I was assured that our demands were reasonable and would be fulfilled without delay.

I think I should point out that assistance delayed is assistance denied. It would not serve our purpose if the essential necessities do not reach us in time.

There are other matters too which I would like to bring to your notice and speedy attention.

Despite the fact that Kashmir Janata Party is hardly one and half months old we tried to be in time in drawing our plans and implementing them. But sometimes Central intervention puts brakes on our speed which is detrimental to our cause. I do not want to make a long narration about it. But I would refer to one.

We prepared an election manifesto with a sense of responsibility keeping in view the sentiments, emotions as well as the reasonable demands of the people. This is a document which would have offset the damaging propaganda done by our opponents. We consulted our Jammu colleagues about it and they suggested certain alterations which were made. It was printed and we intended to release it to the press.

Now we are told by our friend Krishna Kantji that it has to be got approved by the Central Party which may take many days. This will render it practically useless because our candidates and workers will be deprived of a powerful weapon with which to face the opposition and its pernicious propaganda.

I have only to add that you and other central leaders may kindly realise the unenviable position in which I have been put and I crave a favourable and sympathetic attitude if the Janata revolution has to be brought to fruition in Jammu and Kashmir State.

I, therefore, thought of writing this letter to you and impressing upon you the gravity of the situation. I can only hope that you will kindly take up the matter immediately with the central leadership.

With kindest regards,

Yours sincerely,

M. M. Sayeed Masoodi
Convener, Ad Hoc Committee

Shri Asoka Mehta
Janata Party Office
Jantar Mantar Road
New Delhi

APPENDIX D

**Janata Party
Jammu and Kashmir**

13/JPC/77

**Forest Lodge
Srinagar, Kashmir
14-6-77**

My dear Morarjibhai,

You are, I am certain, fully aware under what circumstances I undertook the onerous responsibility of building up the Janata Party organisation in Jammu and Kashmir State. The burden has become heavier due to the forthcoming assembly elections. My old age and ill health forbade me to shoulder the responsibility but the persuasion of Shri Asoka Mehta and other friends became irresistible, and I yielded.

Probably you know the tremendous odds I and my colleagues have to face. Our opponents have been in the field for decades and have well-equipped and well-built organisations. The Janata Party Unit in the State is hardly one and half months old. That makes the fight unequal. What is worse, the National Conference leaders are unscrupulous and though underservedly reputed for being secularists and pro-India, they do not hesitate to raise communal, sectional and anti-India passions to rouse the electorate against us. Having failed in this the National Conference leaders have, as a last resort, collected riff-raff elements to cow down our workers in particular and voters in general.

I have no doubt that you will have been posted with reports of the dastard attacks on our candidate, Dr. Jagat Mohini, on buses carrying supporters of our ally, Mir Waiz Farooq, at different places on way to Anantnag when over hundred persons

including ladies were injured and, finally, murderous attempt on the lives of my esteemed colleagues, Kh. G.M.D. Karra and Shri Prem Nath Bazaz and myself.

Our task has, therefore, become very difficult but we are not deterred or daunted and are determined to carry on the fight to victorious end. But we depend on fullest cooperation from the Centre which was assured to us before the Kashmir Unit was formed. I regret to say that the cooperation is not forthcoming in the measure in which it was expected.

I do not propose to state all the cases in which we have experienced the lack of cooperation. But I would bring to your notice two matters which are of great importance to us and require your active and sympathetic consideration.

On 18th May we despatched a memorial to Shri Chandra Shekhar stating our minimum needs in money and material. We are told that our demands were reasonable and would soon be fulfilled. But this has been done partially though the elections are only 12 days away. Till now we do not have a single vehicle to go about. The fleet of jeeps which was promised has not arrived and our activities are apt to get slackened. This is one worry.

After a great deal of deliberation the election committee has drawn up an election manifesto to adequately meet the challenges thrown at us by the National Conference leadership. In it we have endeavoured to neutralise all the vicious and forceful propaganda launched to excite passions of the Kashmiris.

We have taken utmost care to make out the points for guidance of the candidates and for satisfying the legitimate desires and aspirations of the people and for vindicating their grievances. The manifesto was read and approved by Jammu members of the election committee after making corrections they deemed fit.

We have considered every aspect of the election problem and included only such points in the manifesto without which we may not be able to lead our candidates to victory and the electorate to vote for the Janata Party. The manifesto has been printed both in English and Urdu. The Hindi edition too is under print.

If the manifesto is altered at this stage or any of the items included in it deleted it will adversely affect the election situation in the State. I would therefore earnestly request that the manifesto, a printed copy of which was handed over to Shri Krishna Kant for your perusal, may be approved. Its circulation in the electorate will be highly helpful to us. Any delay in its circulation will detract from its usefulness.

I have only to add that we are expecting that our minimum needs to run the elections which we have stated in our memorial to the address of Shri Chandra Shekhar will be met without further delay and the manifesto returned immediately duly approved.

With kindest regards,

Yours sincerely,

M.M. Syed Masoodi
Convener Ad Hoc Committee

Shri Morarji Desai
Prime Minister
New Delhi

APPENDIX E

Janata Party Jammu and Kashmir

**Forest Lodge
Srinagar, Kashmir
July 7, 1977**

The following resolution was adopted by the Ad Hoc Committee of the J & K Janata Party in a meeting here today :

“The Ad Hoc Committee of the J & K Janata Party considering the developments of the past weeks culminating in the successful polls on 30th June and 3rd July believes that it is a sign of great significance that for the first time after Independence, despite certain irregularities in procedure and terrorisation in some quarters, a real contest took place between political parties which commanded popular support.

“Though the Committee disapproves of the religious, communal and sectional propaganda launched by the National Conference to rouse passions of semi-literate and ignorant people to catch votes and of the wide terrorisation and hooliganism by the Conference men to prevent opponents, particularly Janata men and women, from casting their votes, honours the verdict of the people in the hope that the holding of elections will prove a step in the establishment of democratic institutions in the State.

“The Ad Hoc Committee welcomes the latest statement of Sheikh Abdullah that his party will fully cooperate with the Union Government in translating the dreams of Mahatma Gandhi in practice.

“The Committee cannot, however, refrain from pointing out

that the unbridled hooliganism which has been unleashed in the garb of victory celebrations all over the valley is out of tune with the declaration of Sheikh Abdullah. The committee is apprehensive that fascism is raising its ugly head in the name of democracy because the National Conference is giving long rope to hoodlums in creating the alarming situation in which thousands of innocent people including women and children are being roughly handled by the ruffians. In particular Janata Party offices have been ransacked, flags and signboards removed and burned, workers especially candidates assaulted, injured and humiliated, their houses looted; all those men and women harassed who are believed to have shown any sympathy with Janata Party.

The Committee strongly condemns such atrocities and misdeeds of the National Conference hooligans and expects the administration to take strong measures to end them.

In spite of the fact that the State Janata is only two months old and without any organisational structure as possessed by its rival parties, the Committee notes with satisfaction that the party was able to secure many lakhs of votes which is by all accounts appreciable.

The Ad Hoc Committee congratulates the State people for responding heartily to the call of the party by rising above the prejudices of religion, caste and sect and thereby preserving peaceful atmosphere; it puts on record its appreciation of the devotion with which thousands of workers laboured night and day to make such achievement possible.

The immediate task before the party, in the opinion of the Committee, is to build the organisation from grassroots and make it a massive structure which can stand the tests which the party has to face in the days to come. The Committee, therefore, advises all leaders and workers of the party to bend their energy to accomplish the task of raising the edifice which alone can prove of great assistance in laying the foundations of democracy in the J & K State."

APPENDIX F

New Delhi
July 14, 1977

The following statement has been issued by Prem Nath Bazaz, spokesman of the Ad Hoc Committee of J & K Janata Party :

“For the first time during the past thirty years the elections in Kashmir were contested by parties commanding public support on issues which deeply concerned the electorate. For once there was a serious challenge to the monopolistic leadership of Sheikh Abdullah and his party, National Conference, from secular-minded sections most of whom in the Valley consisted of Muslims, who had rallied under the banner of Janata Party. If ever politically-conscious Muslims were emotionally involved in pro-India movement they were those supporting Janata candidates in the elections.

“In March last when the State Congress Legislative Party withdrew its support to Abdullah government and the Sheikh was ousted from power he was an unpopular figure. Apart from the somersaults that he had turned on State's accession issue since 1947, the nepotism, corruption and misuse of power for which he was roundly blamed, he had lost support of the State people. The need of a new dynamic leadership which could be trusted to deliver goods was felt by large numbers of disillusioned persons.

With the announcement of the formation of Ad Hoc Committee of the J & K Janata Party under the leadership of the universally respected elderly statesman, Maulana Mohammad Sayed Masoodi, thousands of political workers defected from National Conference and Congress to join the new party. By the end of May Janata in Kashmir had become a force to be reckoned with; it was anti-Abdullah wave which was erroneously

confused with Janata wave in the rest of the country, that made it so.

“Sheikh Abdullah at once recognised the seriousness of the situation. He made repeated attempts to form alliance with the central leadership of the Janata Party but failed. With the phenomenal growth of Kashmir Janata unit he became desperate and resorted to fascist methods to meet the challenge. He revived the almost forgotten slogan of plebiscite and gave a call for secession of the State from India if need be. Since minority communities like Shias, Hindus, and followers of Mirwaiz Farooq called Bakaras solidly supported Janata he inflamed Shia-Sunni, Hindu-Muslim and Sher-Bakara animosities. Above all, he roused religious hatred and base tribal passions of the Muslim masses against Janata Party. He publicly and repeatedly charged that Janata was Jan Sangh in a new grab the hands of whose leaders were soaked with Muslim blood. He accused Janata Muslim leaders of refraining from recitation of Koran at the beginning of public meetings. The National Conference workers went from door to door with the holy scripture in hand compelling Muslims to swear by it that they will vote for Conference candidates who will defend them against Hindu aggression and not for Janata men who stand for Hindu India with the ultimate aim of subjugating Muslims.

“Having thus poisoned the Muslim mind, Sheikh Abdullah organised a band of hooligans, convicted criminals and militant young men to terrorize opposition by violent acts. The Janata offices were raided, workers beaten, many injured, their houses ransacked and shops looted. Protests of Janata leaders proved unavailing, a voice in the wilderness.

“In the beginning of June anti-Abdullah wave began to subside and anti-India wave took its place. Again, the people outside Kashmir were wrong and the Indian National Press mistaken to confuse it with Abdullah wave. The anger against Abdullah’s misdeeds existed but it was over-shadowed by the hatred for India which had been systematically generated by the National Conference. Unfortunately the Muslim personnel of the Kashmir administration who were the foremost in condemning Abdullah a couple of months earlier, now became his supporters. The Kashmir Police condoned Conference rowdyism. For reasons

unknown, Governor L.K. Jha adopted the same line and failed to maintain law and order when innumerable cases of goondaism were brought to his notice.

“Still feeling his position insecure, Sheikh Abdullah feigned serious illness. Jha sounded alarm to the central leadership that the “great hero” was breathing his last. Immediately came messages of sympathy from the highly placed including the Prime Minister Morarji Desai who was then in London. Forgetting the healthy tradition of the Indian Army to remain aloof from politics, two top ranking generals called at the “sick” man’s house not only to pay their own homage but affection from rank and file. In the midst of a toughly fought election it gave setback to the propaganda of the Janata Party. This was what Sheikh had desired to achieve. As subsequent events have proved he was never seriously ill but the central Janata leaders were taken in by the ruse played on them.

“The Conference rowdyism culminated on the black 3rd July when the elections were held in the Valley. Despite the pleadings of the Janata leaders no adequate police arrangements were made to inspire confidence in the average voter that he was safe to cast vote as he wished. In almost all constituencies disturbers of peace were let loose, polling agents of Janata candidates were humiliated and beaten in the presence of police and polling officials, many booths were captured by Conference men and false votes cast; thousands of Janata supporters desisted from casting vote for fear of reprisals. The protests of Janata men were neither heard nor acknowledged. On counting day seals of many ballot boxes were found broken and the ballot papers tampered with. Frequently it was discovered that a number of ballot papers were folded together and put in the ballot boxes. In protest many a candidate withdrew their cooperation and retired from the counting tables.

“No sooner was the fake victory of the National Conference declared on 4th July than a reign of terror descended on the Valley. Though an order under Section 144 Cr. P.C. was promulgated by the Authority, big and small processions of hoodlums went round beating Janata men and women, tearing their clothes and robbing them of valuables; the Janata candidates and prominent workers became special target of the hooligans.

Hundreds of houses were pelted, windows and doors damaged; shops were looted and life of peaceful citizens made miserable. There was harassment on a large scale in the Valley. All Janata offices were ransacked, flags hauled down and burned along with the sign boards. Organisations such as Kashmir Motor Drivers Association were attacked, their property seized and their leaders forced to raise the Conference flags in place of the Janata flags. Some office bearers of the bodies were arrested to make room for pro-Conference men. Nearly a hundred Janata workers were injured in the process, some of them seriously.

“Afraid of danger to their lives, eighty-five families in Srinagar have evacuated their homes and taken shelter in safer areas; many of them are lodged in Islamia School. Though intimation has been received of such evacuation from other parts of the Valley exact figures are not available.

“It is a grim story of Sheikh Abdullah’s “triumph” in the elections which have been declared as peaceful and orderly by the Indian Government and the national press.

“We demand the institution of a powerful commission to go into the sordid affair to find out the truth for the information of the nation to enable it to make a fair appraisal.”

(ii)

New Delhi
July 16, 1977

The following statement has been issued to the Press by Prem Nath Bazaz, spokesman Jammu and Kashmir Janata Party :

“Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, Chief Minister of Kashmir, and some of his colleagues have censured rowdiness and claimed that peaceful conditions have been restored in the Valley. But the fact remains that lawlessness prevails in the area, hooligans continue to be at work unrestricted and the average citizen, especially those who worked or voted for Janata candidates in the elections, are harassed by all means and, therefore, feel terror-stricken in different places, particularly in Srinagar.

“I enclose three lists giving complete details of 22 Janata offices attacked or captured, of 53 shops looted or forcibly shut down and of 85 families who were compelled to leave their hearth and home and take shelter in those localities which are free from danger of molestation. When her grown up daughter was dragged from her house in Zaindar Mohallah, one Muslim lady, Mrs. Halwai, died of heart failure.

“Although over two lakhs of persons cast their votes for Janata in the valley and scores of Janata offices functioned in all the forty-two constituencies before the polls, National Conference leaders are determined to uproot all that stands for Janata and silence the supporters of Janata and democracy once and for all, by means fair or foul.

“It is clear that the National Conference leaders either do not mean what they say about curbing their riff-raff followers or else they are unable to bring miscreants under control who, once aroused, have adopted rebellious attitude. Sheikh Abdullah thinks that by merely praising the Central Janata leadership, Prime Minister Morarji Desai in particular, the miseries of the Kashmiris will not be taken notice of and

full support will be accorded to his government while Kashmir Janata is groaning under unprecedented atrocities.

“It is the moral and constitutional responsibility of the Central Government to make on the spot sifting enquiries of the gruesome happenings in the Valley during the past month and to take immediate action to set the matters right and restore confidence of the people.”

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